

The Progressive

September 2015

Democracy and Elections

BILL LUEDERS ON THE AMAZING SCOTT WALKER
SARAH JAFFE ON LABOR'S BURST OF ENERGY
BLUE JEAN NATION'S NEW POLITICS

+ NEW ORLEANS TEN YEARS AFTER KATRINA



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Amitabh Pal

The Progressive tackles the forces distorting our economy, corrupting our democracy, and imperiling our planet, and champions peace, civil liberties, equality, and justice.



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Reclaiming Politics

Hard to believe there's more than a year to go before the 2016 presidential election. The campaigns are in full swing, as seventeen candidates, at last count, jockey to grab the wheel in the Republican primary clown car. Bernie Sanders is giving Hillary Clinton a scare with big rallies across the country. And labor unions, citizens groups, and ordinary people are trying to figure out how to have any voice at all in our increasingly money-dominated electoral process.

We cover all of these corners of the political landscape in this issue of the magazine.

Our Associate Editor Bill Lueders contributes a big feature on one of the leading contenders for the Republican nomination, Scott Walker, whom he covered for years as a member of the capitol press corps in Wisconsin. Bill shares his insights on the governor who, with the enthusiastic backing of a national network of rightwing billionaires, turned his home state into a petri dish for an aggressively divisive brand of politics. Now he's taking his "divide and conquer" strategy nationwide.

Walker appeals to Republican primary voters with his combination of rightwing policy positions and his aw-shucks, regular-guy demeanor. Bill, who spent time interviewing Walker and observing him up close, describes what it's like to fall under his spell, how he operates, and why it's a mistake to underestimate him.

On the other side of the political divide, grassroots activist Mike McCabe, also in Wisconsin, has been devoting his considerable energy to the central problem of American politics: How do regular people reclaim our democracy?

I chose McCabe's book, *Blue Jean Nation*, as one of the best of the year in 2014. In it, he chronicled how FDR Democrats in poor, rural towns like the one where he grew up became Tea Party Republicans, and why so

many people are either voting against their own interests or simply not voting at all. Now, McCabe has launched a movement to organize the people he describes as "politically homeless." We sent talented feature writer Nathan Comp into the field to cover McCabe and the Blue Jean Nation movement. He files his report this month on how the effort is going.

Labor reporter Sarah Jaffe covers the leading edge of organizing, as Fight for \$15 cuts a swath through the nation, winning concrete victories for workers. Unions, after suffering years of losses, are gaining some traction, she reports, and beginning to build a strategy to reclaim power.

From New Orleans, Ashana Bigard shares a powerful first-person view of what has happened to her city ten years after Hurricane Katrina, and what real improvement would look like for her community, her children, her schools, and the people and culture she loves.

And Managing Editor Amit Pal has an in-depth interview with Juan Cole, on his progressive vision for international politics.

I hope you find these pieces an enlightening alternative to the electoral sideshow.

We are saying goodbye to our wonderful editorial intern, Tanner Cole, with this issue. Check out his book review, "For the Hate of Hillary," on page 44. Tanner has been a joy to work with, and took on critical tasks on our website and social media this summer. A big thank you to the Scripps Howard Foundation for sending him to us. We wish Tanner all the best as he finishes up his last semester of college in Kentucky, and in all his future endeavors. Whoever hires Tanner will be lucky to get him! ♦



Ruth

Feel the Bern!

In July, Senator Bernie Sanders drew 10,000 people to the Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Madison, Wisconsin—the biggest turnout any 2016 presidential candidate had seen so far. A few weeks later, he drew 11,000 people to the convention center in Phoenix.

The size and enthusiasm of Sanders's crowds—waving “Feel the Bern” signs and hanging on the candidate’s every word—shows how hungry people are for a true progressive politics.

Sanders started his speech in Madison by making fun of state Republicans who put up a billboard calling him an “extremist,” and he riffed on what extremism really means.

“Denying workers collective bargaining rights is extremism,” Bernie said. “When you tell a woman she cannot control her own body, that’s extremism.”

Indeed.

If the Tea Party can propel retrograde, immigrant-bashing, austerity-pushing politics in the Republican primary, why shouldn’t Sanders’s calls for overwhelmingly popular causes like universal health care gain traction among Democrats?

The Independent, socialist Senator from Vermont attributes the large crowds he’s been drawing to popular anxiety about the disappearing middle class and increasing inequality. “We are seeing the rebirth of a strong, national progressive movement,” he says.

“People are anxious to hear the truth,” says Sanders. “The American people are sick and tired of a political and economic system that benefits the wealthy and powerful. It’s grotesque that the top one-tenth of 1 percent owns

as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent.”

Among his proposals: raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, rebuilding America’s infrastructure, withdrawing from trade deals that disadvantage American workers, and making college tuition free.

As the Sanders phenomenon catches fire, there has been a predictable stream of derisive coverage in the mainstream press: How can he possibly compete with Hillary Clinton’s money, star power, and establishment credibility? Who does he think he is?

Almost as soon as he announced his presidential bid, the usually congenial Gail Collins interviewed Sanders and wrote a column in *The New York Times* mocking him for refusing to admit he has no chance to win.

This trap is familiar to progressive contenders, from Ralph Nader to Dennis Kucinich. If they say they actually think they could be President, they are portrayed as liars or fools. If they say otherwise, their campaigns are instantly over.

To a local reporter in Wisconsin who asked Sanders how he could possibly compete financially, the Senator replied: “That’s a very good question.” And it’s not just a question for his campaign, he said: As a result of the “disastrous, horrific” *Citizens United* decision, the power of the very wealthy in elections has been enormously magnified.

“We used to make fun of countries around the world where a handful of very wealthy people controlled the political and economic system,” Sanders said, noting that one family, the Kochs, is poised to spend more than



FROM THE PROGRESSIVE, 1935

either political party in the upcoming presidential race.

It's not a good sign that, today, we make fun of candidates like Sanders for thinking they stand a chance.

To say that the Sanders campaign is a joke is to give up on the idea that people, not money, rule our democracy. That might be obvious to the Beltway crowd. But outside the centers of power in Washington, D.C., and New York City, a lot of people are not buying it.

By early summer, 200,000 Americans had donated an average of \$37 each and organized 1,500 house parties to help to fuel Sanders's grassroots campaign.

Those people do not think Sanders's efforts, or his message, are silly.

Some of the derision aimed at Sanders is a sign that Hillary Clinton is beginning to take him seriously. Apparently, the Democratic frontrunner is nervous enough that her opposition research team has kicked into gear.

Thus we have been reading a lot lately about Sanders's scruffy radicalism in the 1960s, his embarrassing (but ultimately harmless) essays on sexual freedom from his underground newspaper days, and descriptions of how he drove an old beater of a car and slept on friends' couches right up until he became mayor of Burlington, Vermont.

This portrait of Sanders as a hopelessly down-at-the-heels character who lacks polish is based on a bedrock assumption that America is best represented by corporate types who wear suits and drive expensive cars.

That may be true on TV. But in reality, most Americans, as Sanders so clearly spells out, are not living the lives of the rich and famous.

More importantly, the interests of the vast majority of Americans are at odds with the interests of the Wall Street hedge fund managers and the billionaires who are funding the mainstream candidates in both political parties. Sanders's ideas about making college affordable and increasing wages and job protections for American workers speak to the huge majority of us. It's amazing, given the explosion of college debt and the collapse of working-class wages, that we haven't heard more such common-sense proposals from other political leaders.

As both inequality and alienation increase, we badly need Sanders's voice.

There are legitimate criticisms of the Sanders campaign, of course.

At the Netroots Nation conference in Phoenix at the end of July, he appeared grumpy and tone-deaf as he declined to engage with a spontaneous Black Lives Matter protest focused on the death of Sandra Bland in police custody in Texas, and ignored the chant to "say her name."

Sanders did get the message, though. He was the first candidate to speak directly about Bland, in a speech in Dallas immediately after Netroots.

Sanders needs to do more to build bridges and cultivate trust with a generation of young activists of color who don't feel adequately respected or heard.

His core issue has always been economic justice, and while his positions on race, as well as women's rights and gay rights, are consistently progressive, he prefers to stay in his comfort zone. That needs to change if he is going to unite the broad progressive movement he talks about. Hillary Clinton, who has deep and enthusiastic support among feminist, LGBTQ, and civil rights leaders, will work hard to exploit any perceived gaps.

But Sanders is clearly listening.

Right before his big rally in Madison, I asked him about criticism that he has not spoken out about attacks on women's health. He sounded surprised, and pointed out his lifetime 100 percent pro-choice voting record.

"You are right that there has been an attack on women's health all over," he said. "And the federal government has a role to play. I will do everything in my power to help protect women's access to abortion and every kind of birth control." That night, in his speech, two out of three examples he cited of Republican extremism were its attacks on women's health.

And in a speech to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he spoke directly to the Black Lives Matter movement, tying police violence to the "violence of economic deprivation."

Sanders is the only candidate talking about profound change and a truly ambitious, progressive vision for America. He comes out of a serious movement background. And he is working with current movements to build something lasting and real.

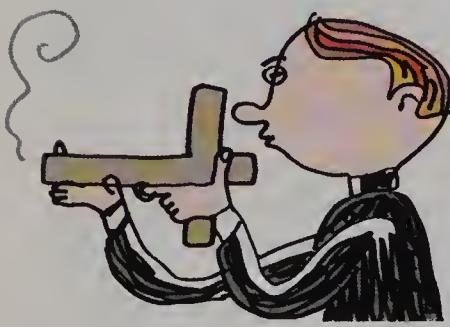
No matter what the outcome of the primary, that's good news for progressives. ♦

Animal Behavior

The Oklahoma Republican Party, in a Facebook post, noted that some 46 million Americans are now poor enough to receive food stamp assistance. "Meanwhile," it added, "the National Park Service . . . asks us 'Please Do Not Feed the Animals.' Their stated reason for the policy is because 'The animals will grow dependent on handouts and will not learn to take care of themselves.' Thus ends today's lesson in irony #OKGOP." The party subsequently deleted the post, saying it never intended to compare food stamp recipients to animals.



Let Freedom Ring Out, Like Gunfire



The FBI has concluded that the man who massacred nine people in a South Carolina church should have been barred from buying the gun he used due to his admitted illegal drug use.

But the gun store made the sale, as allowed, because three days had passed while an FBI examiner was still investigating. Senator Chuck Grassley, Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said the incident underscored the need to, you guessed it, do nothing: "It's disastrous that this bureaucratic mistake prevented existing laws from working and blocking an illegal gun sale. The facts undercut attempts to use the tragedy to enact unnecessary gun laws."

The Donald and Vlad, BFFs

Businessman Donald Trump, Republican candidate for President, told an audience in Las Vegas that the problem with U.S.-Russian relations is that President Obama does not have Russian President Vladimir Putin's respect. But Trump thought he and fellow megalomaniac Putin would be pals: "I think we would get along very, very well."

All in Good Fun

Fans of the Arizona Coyotes, upset that Mayor Jerry Weiers of Glendale, a Phoenix suburb, voted to end the city's role as host of the pro hockey team, raised \$10,000 for the privilege of shooting him with a taser. The money went to a charity that supports the city's first responders. "I wanted to do something shocking," Weiers said after being hit with the flying electrodes, according to the *Arizona Republic*. Said Ronda Pearson, who pulled the trigger, "It wasn't about revenge, it was about the charity."

Who Would Jesus Hate?

In a sermon following the Supreme Court's ruling allowing same-sex marriage, the Reverend

Robert Jeffress of First Baptist Dallas said the rainbow colors associated with gay rights represent "depravity, degradation, and what the Bible calls sexual perversion," the Associated Press reported. He added, "This is a great opportunity for our church to share the truth and love of Jesus Christ."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STUART GOLDENBERG

Readers are invited to submit No Comment items. Please send original links or clippings with the name and date of publication to editorial@progressive.org or 409 E. Main Street, Madison, WI 53703. Submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned.

Thanks for the Food Issue

Thank you for the July/August issue on food, water, and land, which offered insight into many important issues. It reinforced my gratitude for Maine, where the local food movement is thriving, the number of farms is increasing, the average age of farmers is going down, and I can get Eliot Coleman's fresh greens at a local winter market!

A huge problem for small farms and food producers is the cost of meeting the regulations created (necessarily) for the industrial farms and national distribution system. When Maine's Department of Agriculture decided to impose them on small farms in 2009 for the first time, a group of small farmers and their patrons got together and wrote the Local Food and Community Self-Governance Ordinance, relieving farmers and home kitchen producers from licensing and inspection requirements if they are selling directly to consumers. Sixteen towns in Maine have passed the ordinance, and more are working on it. It has been tested in court and has not been preempted.

I love my ten-minute drives, mostly through woods, to get milk, yogurt, cheese, eggs, chicken, beef, and pork from a sustainable farm that is producing healthful and delicious food and rich, carbon-sequestering soil. We should all be able to do something similar.

—Bonnie Preston
Blue Hill, Maine

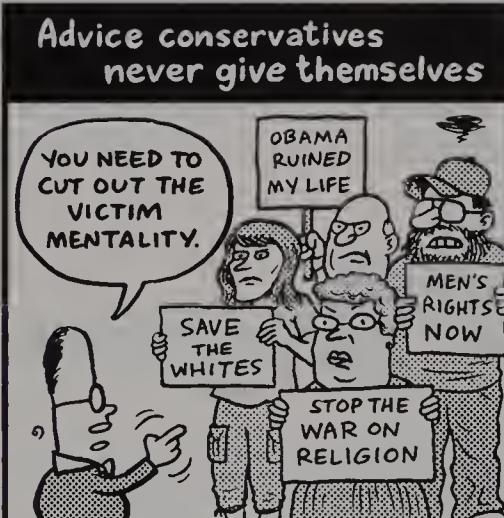
Money and Drought

Jason Mark's article, "Field Notes on a State in Drought" (June issue), was a good read. I would add a couple of things on the subject.

First, nut trees. I have heard the rumor from a couple of places that almond, pistachio, and other nut planters are actually betting the State of California will soon be asking them to pull the trees out and compensating them for the "loss." This would include not just planting costs, but also the projected profits from the crop. I hope these rumors are apocryphal.

Second, I believe the failure of forced conservation will be the excuse to go to a water "free market."

SLOWPOKE © Jen Sorensen



Who has the dollars wins at this new Monopoly game—at a huge price for the vast majority of us Californians.

—M.J. Shepley
Sacramento, California

American Apartheid

Remember when apartheid was the law of the land in South Africa, and the white masters stationed police forces throughout the country to protect themselves against unarmed blacks?

Although camouflaged by the disguise of "equality for all" here in the United States, that same architecture of racial bigotry remains entrenched in our own society ("South Carolina's Police State," June issue).



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What other reason can account for the deployment of military weapons to police squads that are patrolling our cities' streets, where multitudes of blacks live in hopeless poverty, where schools are underfunded, and government officials continue to ignore the plight of black people?

While we boast that our country offers opportunities for everyone, white bigots (many in police uniform) continue to shoot and kill unarmed black citizens.

—David Quintero
Monrovia, California

Police Reform

I appreciated David Couper's commentary on policing ("A Police Chief's Call for Reform," June issue), but experienced a sense of frustration. For most of the past year, I have been promoting Peelian principles (the policing ethics developed by Sir Robert Peel) as the proper basis of all police work. With the exception of one city council member, nobody has responded positively, neither politicians nor the media. I am forced to conclude all these people, including those at *The Progressive*, would rather talk about a problem than a solution. As long as that continues, they are part of the problem.

—Katharine W. Rylaarsdam
Baltimore, Maryland

P > From the Web

In response to Ruth Conniff's "The Battle Over Education and Civil Rights":

The central folly in the "test and punish" approach to education seems obvious.

Schools in need of more attention and funding are tested and punished by draconian measures—including even less funding. All schools must be adequately, not equally, funded. Positive measures, not punishment, must be afforded to those most in need.

Unfortunately, schools alone cannot solve the many problems that prevent students from scoring well on tests manufactured by profit-seekers. Schools, students, and teachers are a vital part of the nation's infrastructure.

—Doug Giebel



> From Facebook

On "Walker's Total Destruction in Wisconsin":

Calling Scott Walker "corrupt" doesn't even begin to scratch the surface. Thank you, Rebecca Kemble, for this must-read detailed analysis and introduction of Walker to the rest of the country. As she wrote, on

The Progressive's website:

"To sell this plutocratic agenda to the masses, or at least to a slim majority of the voting masses, the GOP and their media outlets did what they do best: Rev up the propaganda machine and dress up their initiatives in simplistic, fear-based rhetoric and faux populism."

—Greg Brown

Madison, Wisconsin

The recent Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling [to shut down a John Doe probe into alleged illegal activity involving Governor Scott Walker] is directly related to the justices' refusal to recuse themselves from cases involving their own campaign supporters. Several of the conservative justices owe their positions to the same shadowy groups the John Doe was investigating. This level of quid-pro-quo cronyism and corruption signals that the Wisconsin Supreme Court no longer recognizes a functional definition of a "conflict of interest."

—Charles Patten

Planned Parenthood favored:



> From Twitter

Progressive Magazine @theprogressive The strategy behind the attacks on #PlannedParenthood seems to be removing women from the discussion.

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THE PROGRESSIVE MEDIA PROJECT

Iran Deal Shifts U.S. Relationship to the World

By Moustafa Bayoumi

The Iran nuclear agreement is a win, above all, for global diplomacy. Perhaps the most significant fact of the deal is not up for debate. This will be the first time that a country facing Chapter 7 sanctions of the U.N. Security Council (the strictest sanctions around) is having them lifted through negotiations.

What the accord shows us is the possibility and necessity of diplomacy in the Middle East. In other words, the significance of the Iran deal is more than its own accord. It illustrates that when multiple countries unite and undertake a concerted and imaginative effort on seemingly intractable issues, real solutions can be found.

We should seize this momentum and be thinking about the next priorities for peaceful resolution in the region.

The global community has abysmally failed in bringing Syria's bloody civil war to an end. Renewed international efforts on that horrific conflict, now with most likely greater Iranian cooperation, must take place.

We should also aim to create a nuclear weapons-free zone for the entire Middle East and find a just and lasting solution for the Israel/Palestine conflict. Only diplomacy—real diplomacy involving the kind of difficult work exhibited by the Iran deal—has a chance of success in these situations. This will require exerting pressure not only on our foes but also on our friends. ♦

PUBLIC SCHOOL SHAKEDOWN

Education and Civil Rights

By Peter Greene

Kati Haycock is president and founder of the Education Trust, a Gates-funded, test-pushing advocacy group that supported No Child Left Behind and helped craft the Common Core. She took to her website to attack the president of the largest teachers' union in the country, NEA's Lily Eskelsen Garcia, for opposing test-and-punish policies.

As the reformsters have found a strong tactical advantage in using the civil rights argument to promote test and punish, let me see if I can distill their important points here:

Argument one: The systemic ignoring, underserving, and general neglect of nonwhite, nonwealthy populations is a real problem. "Do nothing" and "Go back to doing what we used to do" are not viable solutions.

However, test scores don't tell us much of anything, because the big standardized tests are narrowly focused, poorly designed, and extremely limited in their scope. Furthermore, we can predict test score results pretty well just using demographic information. So to claim that we would be fumbling in the dark without these



tests, with no idea of how to find schools in trouble, is simply ridiculous.

Argument two: Advocates contend that test scores provide political leverage that forces "The System" to respond. But from New Jersey to Philly to Detroit to Chicago, the response has been the same—instead of help, politicians silence and disenfranchise the members of the community, and privatizers come in to strip-mine the community for profit.

If policymakers responded to low test scores by sitting down with community members to say, "How can we help you," and channeling resources to the schools, I'd feel differently about all this. But that's not even sort of what's happening. Instead, charters may "save" a handful of students while simultaneously making public schools worse for everyone else. ♦

California Recycling Workers Win Fight Over Illegally Low Pay



▲ Recycling workers in San Leandro, California, protest after Alameda County Industries (ACI) fires three workers over their immigration status. The laborers eventually win their battle, and the newly unionized recyclers get fresh contracts mandating a pay raise, protections for immigrant workers, health benefits, and paid vacations. Their wages are now steadily increasing and will reach \$20.94 an hour in 2016.

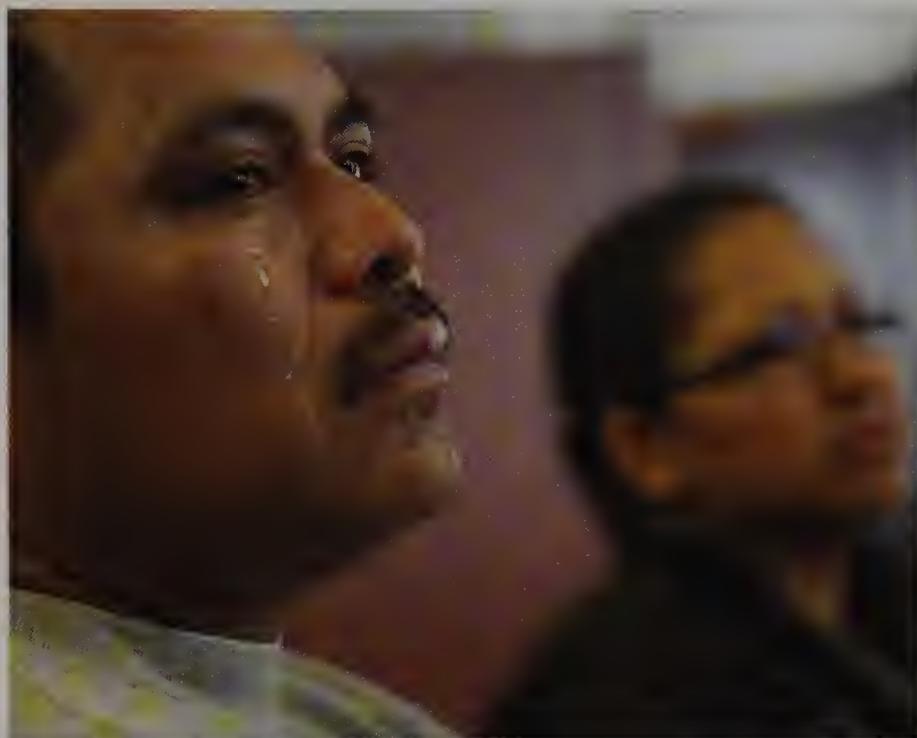
Workers at the ACI recycling facility sort and process paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, and metal from trash collected.



ALL PHOTOS © DAVID BACON



The recyclers clock out after a full day's work. They previously worked for \$8.30 an hour, despite a city ordinance requiring a \$14.17 wage. The workers threatened to sue after learning their wage was illegally low.



The pictured workers, Divina and Alfonzo, worked at the facility for fourteen years. After the lawsuit threat, ACI accused the pair, along with several of their co-workers, of illegally immigrating. They were all fired.



Demand for safety improvements and job security drive the workers to picketing, unionizing, meeting with city officials, and seeking legal action. Eventually, local cities slightly increase their garbage rates and require companies like ACI to use the money for raises.

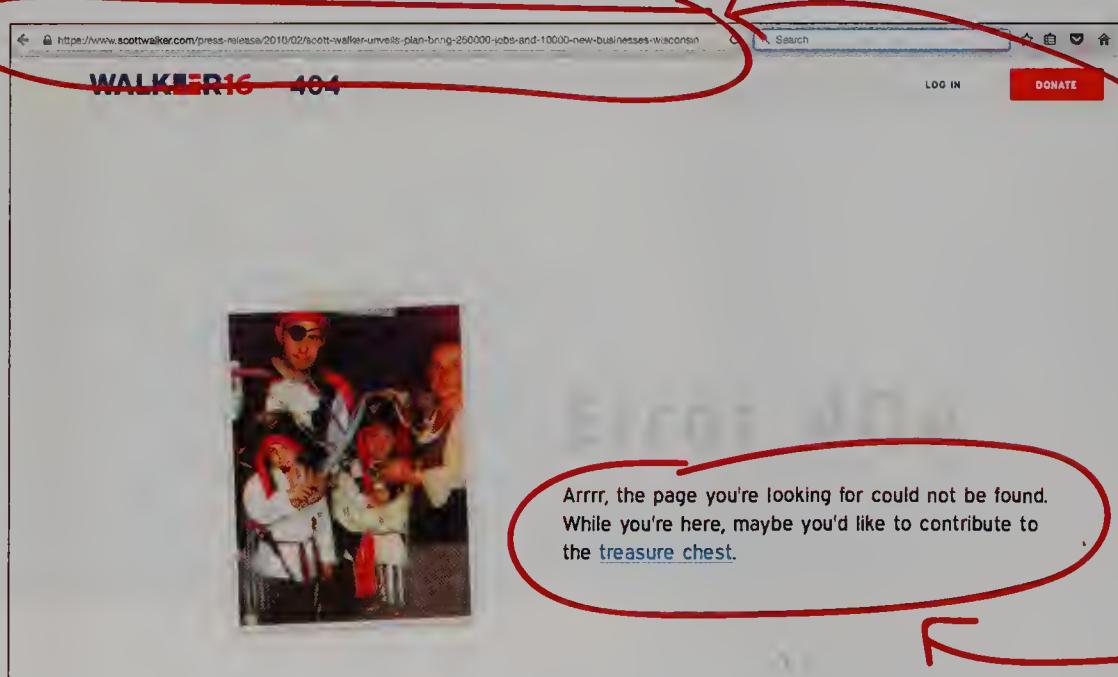
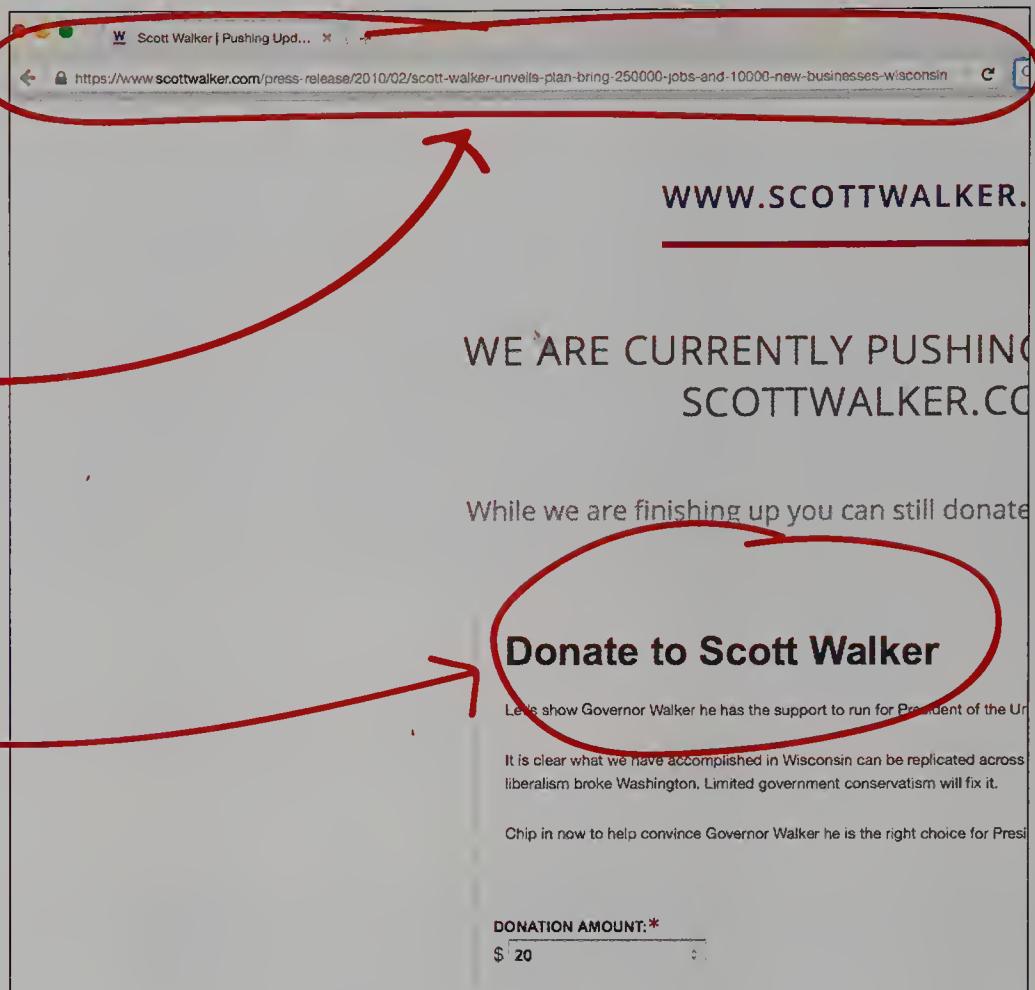


A worker walks out of the plant during a strike at California Waste Solutions. These efforts soon paid off when city officials voted to provide funding for wage increases in a new union contract.

Scott Walker's Bait-and-Switch Jobs Promise

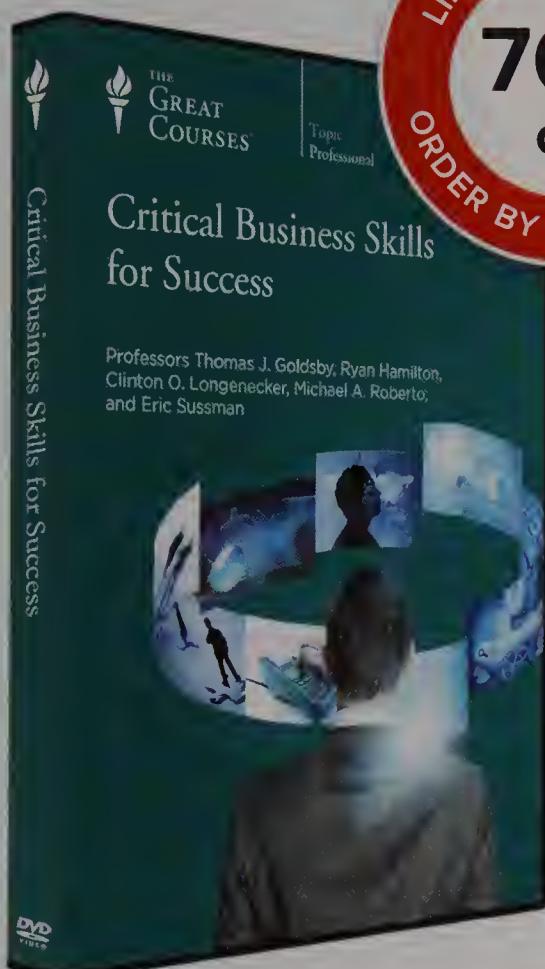
As a candidate for Wisconsin governor in 2010, Scott Walker made a big, bold promise. He issued a press release announcing his plan to bring 250,000 new private-sector jobs to Wisconsin by 2015, the end of his first term.

The original link to the release worked at least until the end of 2012, after Walker survived a recall election. But by mid-2013, as it became clear that Walker would not achieve his goal, this link began taking readers to other pages, which did not mention jobs but did ask for donations.



This is what came up beginning July 13, when Walker declared his candidacy for President. The erstwhile link to his jobs promise led to photo of Walker and his family dressed as pirates, with a plea for visitors to contribute to his campaign “treasure chest.”

So how'd he do on his jobs promise? According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Wisconsin added 131,515 new private-sector jobs during Walker's first term, **53 percent of his mark**.



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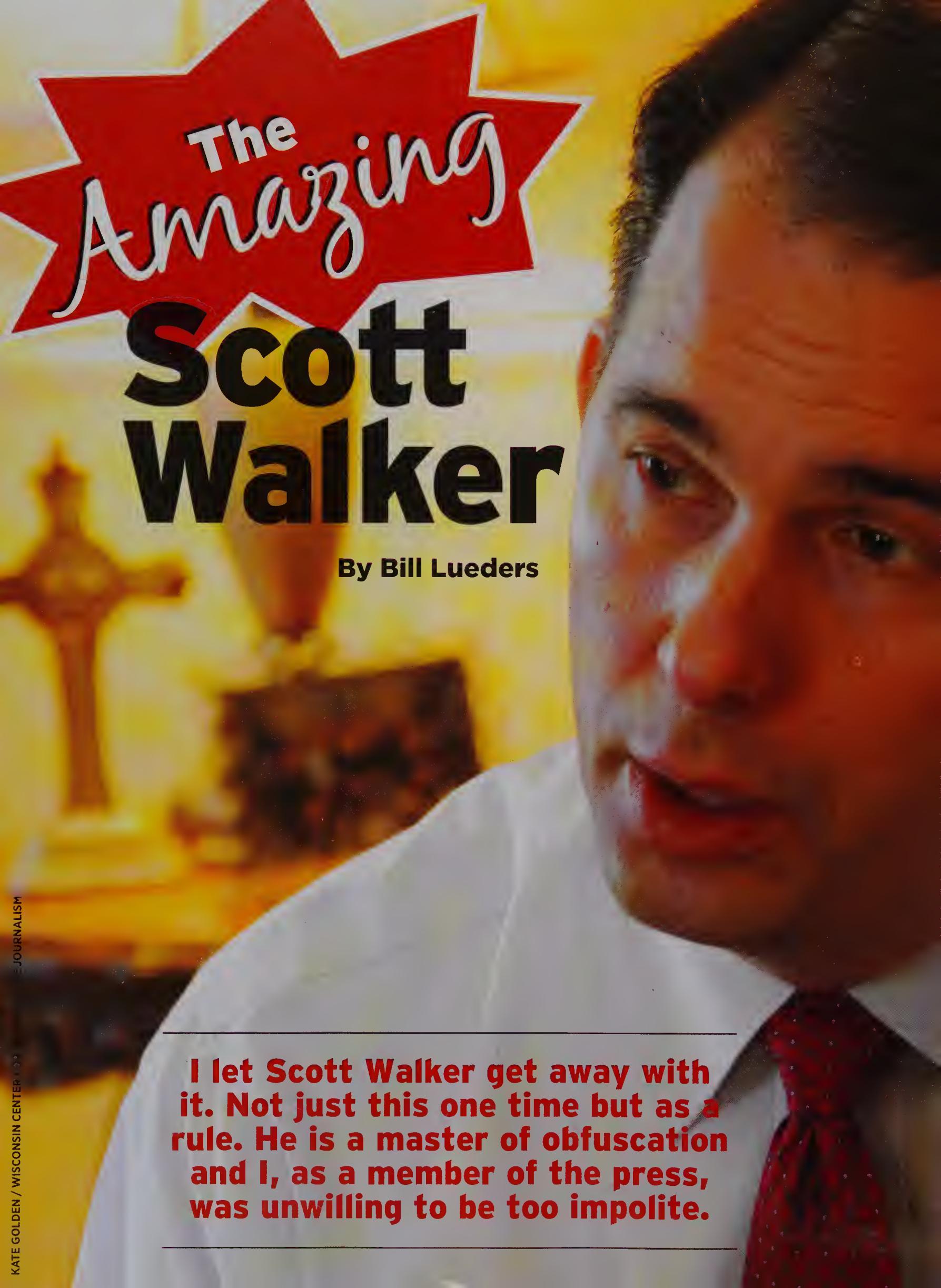
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The Amazing Scott Walker

By Bill Lueders



I let Scott Walker get away with it. Not just this one time but as a rule. He is a master of obfuscation and I, as a member of the press, was unwilling to be too impolite.

My question to Wisconsin's Republican governor, asked at a press conference on February 24, 2011, was about the transparently phony call he had unwittingly taken from a prankster pretending to be billionaire benefactor David Koch, during the height of protests over Walker's plan to kneecap the state's public employee unions.

The call by blogger Ian Murphy, an occasional contributor to *The Progressive*, became huge news, mainly because of Walker's admission that "we thought about" planting troublemakers among protesters, as the caller had suggested.

Walker had also agreed with the caller's characterization of then-Obama adviser David Axelrod as "a son of a bitch" ("No kidding, huh?" Walker had replied) and took no issue when urged to "crush these bastards," meaning protesters. I quoted these words to the governor, asking if he was wrong to have gone along.

He ignored my question and instead gave a canned response to one I hadn't asked, about planting troublemakers: "We acknowledged that some had brought that up but we didn't think that was a good idea." (Actually, he told the caller "the only problem" with this suggestion was that the resulting "ruckus" might raise the pressure on him to compromise.)

I criticized Walker for not answering my question, in a piece I wrote for *Isthmus*, the weekly newspaper

where I worked at the time. But in the crowded conference room, with the chants of thousands of protesters audible through the closed doors, I let him spew his spin.

Perhaps I should have insisted on an answer until I was dragged from the room, shouting, like Al Pacino in *And Justice for All*. But I doubt even

But mostly, Scott Walker is an amazing politician, able to deftly sidestep questions and dissemble with apparent conviction.

that would have knocked Walker off-message.

By the end of 2011, when I interviewed Walker (then as a reporter with the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism), he had a new take on the Koch call. "It was stupid," he told me. "Just the fact that I was duped . . . that I would go off and talk about stuff like that, yeah, it was stupid."

How smart was it for Scott Walker to portray himself as stupid? So smart that he applied the same spin to his account of the episode in his 2013 book, *Unintimidated: A Governor's Story and a Nation's Challenge*. Here he claimed to have announced at his first press conference after news of the fake call surfaced "that it was stupid." This is a complete fabrication; he never said any such thing, as the video of the event attests.

Walker, in his book, portrayed the episode as a gift from God, meant to teach him a lesson. He says he left the

press conference in a funk, opened a devotional book, and came across a message about "the power of humility." Relates Walker, "I looked up and said, 'I hear you, Lord.'"

Let's review: Walker takes an experience in which he appears foolish, gullible, and vile, and refashions it into a political asset, a badge of

honor to shore up his presidential ambitions. He is not so much a spin doctor as an alchemist, turning excrement to gold. It is a quality that greatly enhances his prospects for winning the GOP nomination, and possibly the Presidency.

Some things that are commonly said about Scott Walker need to be said here. He comes across as a likeable guy. When you talk to him, he listens intently. He smiles and laughs at the right moments. He doesn't lose his cool. His friends shower him with praise.

"He's a man of faith, but he doesn't wear it on his sleeve," Brian Fraley, a conservative consultant who's known Walker for many years, told me in 2011. "He's nonjudgmental and doesn't hold anger or grudges. He was raised right."

Walker, forty-seven, is the son of a Baptist minister father and bookkeeper mother. He touts his frugality, symbolized by his brown-bag lunches of ham-and-cheese sandwiches. His stamina is as boundless as his ambition. He rises early and works late.

An analysis of his work calendar in 2011 showed he averaged about sixty hours a week.

But mostly, Scott Walker is an amazing politician, able to deftly sidestep questions and dissemble with apparent conviction. Even some of his foes recognize he has what it takes to become President—but, arguably, nothing you'd want in a person holding that office.

Walker sees his life in grandiose terms. Consider his account of visiting Ronald Reagan's presidential library near Los Angeles in 2012 and being presented with the family Bible. He later told an *aww-ing* audience, "And they brought over a pair of white gloves to me and they said, 'No one has touched this since President Reagan. It is his mother's Bible that he took the oath of office on. Mrs. Reagan would like you to hold it and take a picture with it.'"

As *The Progressive* reported in March, the museum's curator stated in an e-mail that Walker had asked to see the Bible and was not the first to touch it since Reagan. (The library later backtracked, saying it was Walker's staff that made the request and that a "simple misunderstanding" led to his belief that Nancy Reagan had personally granted access.)

But Walker's magical ability to create his own reality runs deeper than that, and it is not only him driving the delusion.

Walker's many fans in the Republican base laud him as a "straight-shooter," even as he com-

piles an astonishing record of documented duplicity, including more than seventy statements deemed "Mostly False," "False," or "Pants on Fire" by PolitiFact Wisconsin, which truth-tests political pronouncements. Far fewer of his statements have been found to be true or mostly true.

Walker is hailed as a success de-

The more people turn against him, the surer he is that he is right. Both praise and criticism have the same effect, motivating him to stay the course.

spite his conspicuous failure to create jobs, his professed top priority. He added barely half of the 250,000 new private-sector jobs he promised in his first term, during which Wisconsin ranked thirty-fifth among states in job creation and dead last in the Midwest, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics. In the first half of this year, state employers issued more layoff notices than in all of 2014.

Meanwhile, Walker's signature job-creation agency is mired in scandal, for giving out huge sums to deadbeat companies. Administration staff pushed for one firm to get more moola even after learning it was in dire straits. But when Walker removed himself as chairman of the imploding agency, one of his GOP legislative allies opined: "He loves Wisconsin so much that he felt that if some of the members on the board feel like the group would be better off if he would not be the chair . . . I'd say that's leadership on his part."

Despite such boosterism, Walker's approval rating in Wisconsin has fallen to 41 percent, with 56 percent of respondents expressing disapproval.

Walker's teflon is more like titanium. He has managed, through sheer political skill, to craft a public image almost completely unrelated to his public record. Still,

the base wants desperately to believe. If Scott Walker the Principled, Accomplished, Straight-Shooting Reformer did not exist, it would have been necessary for conservatives to invent him.

The conference room where Walker held his almost daily press conferences in early 2011, as tens of thousands of protesters flooded the capitol building and grounds, is also where he ultimately signed the law stripping most public employees of their union rights. On the ceiling appear the words of his predecessor Republican governor Robert M. La Follette, the founder of this magazine: "The will of the people shall be the law of the land."

It was here, watching Walker seemingly buck this instruction day after day, that it dawned on me: He is not like other politicians.

Other politicians, faced with the backlash he provoked, would have backed down, accepted some compromises, and declared victory. Instead, Walker held firm, despite pressure from some Republicans to moderate his stand, as *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reporters Jason

Stein and Patrick Marley documented in their definitive book, *More Than They Bargained For*.

As the failed effort to block Walker's anti-union agenda gave way to a recall effort that drew nearly 1 million signatures from among the state's 5.7 million residents, I set out to understand what makes Walker tick. The result was a three-part Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism series that ran in Wisconsin newspapers in January 2012.

Walker admirers said he "doesn't try to make everybody happy" and is "not afraid of controversy." True dat. Foes faulted his "lack of compassion" and refusal to compromise. His mother recalled that when Scott was about eight and the family was living in Plainfield, Iowa, he noticed there was no state flag on the building where city meetings were held.

"He collected money and bought a flag," Patricia Walker said. "He went around carrying a mayonnaise jar." Seriously. This happened in Iowa, a key primary state. Is Scott Walker, who has dusted off this story for use on the campaign trail, made of luck?

But my greatest insight into Walker's character comes from a story he told about raking leaves outside his Wauwatosa home during the thick of the recall. A passing motorist honks and gives him the finger. Moments later, two cars stop and honk. Walker turns to see both drivers giving him the thumbs-up sign.

This tale, whether or not it happened, encapsulates how Walker processes praise and criticism. He's a glutton for approval, to an alarming extent. It's what allows him, despite his professed Boy Scout ethics and evangelical wholesomeness, to

critics, as in his book's repeated references to how bad the people protesting him smelled. He not only courts conflict but seems to find it clarifying: The more people turn against him, the surer he is that he is right. Both praise and criticism have the same effect, motivating him to stay the course.

In his book, Walker concedes that the fight over union rights "bitterly divided our state in ways no previous political debate ever had. To this day, there are people who no longer speak to each other because of it." To him, this is an acceptable outcome.

And yet even this—Walker's passion for pitting people against each other, as captured on the video where he tells a supporter his strategy on unions will be to "use divide and conquer"—is, in the enchanted realm in which he operates, parlayed into an asset. Check out this paean from a *GQ* profile last fall that dubbed Walker "America's most divisive governor":

"One of Walker's most commendable traits is his intellectual honesty. The words he typically uses when referring to his political résumé are conservative, aggressive, reformer, bold, unintimidated, and the like. Never does he identify himself as a 'unifier.' On the contrary, his two decades in office have been marked by bitter division. The governor now presides over a mild-mannered state bearing a deep ideological gash across its midsection. Credit him: He



KATE GOLDEN / WISCONSIN CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

surround himself with people who break the law and yell at him over racist e-mails. It's why he won't blanch at someone who calls his state's residents "bastards" or even Rudy Giuliani's outrageous suggestion that President Obama is not a Christian and does not love his country. ("I don't know," was Walker's take on that.)

On the other side of the equation, criticism flows off Walker like water from a duck. He casually scorns his

has done what he set out to do. He pledged to be a doer, not a healer.”

Reasonable people can debate whether sowing bitter division is something to applaud, but clearly Walker is being applauded for it. His supporters love that he stood up to Democrats, to unions, to lefties. He

wages.”

PolitiFact revised its earlier assessment, rating Walker’s new position a “Full Flop,” but adding, “There may still be a bit of wiggle room in his position.”

With Scott Walker, there always is.

require union membership or dues. In May 2012, on the cusp of his triumph in the recall election, Walker said he had “no interest in pursuing right-to-work legislation in this state,” vowing to do “everything in my power to make sure” the bill did not reach his desk.

Walker is, in fact, astonishingly consistent. He invariably says what he calculates is the right political answer—which changes, depending on the circumstances.

is their bastard-crusher. The question is: Does America need a bastard-crusher-in-chief?

A somewhat lazy criticism embraced by the punditocracy is that Walker is a flip-flopper. He may be too slippery for this label to stick.

Take immigration. In 2013, Walker called on the nation to seek a “legal pathway” for undocumented immigrants. Early this year, he mouthed the GOP mantra in declaring his aversion to “amnesty.” PolitiFact Wisconsin cut him a break, saying the two statements were not incompatible: “Walker didn’t disavow his 2013 remarks [so] we don’t know whether he has a completely new position.”

Then Walker made it official, declaring on *Fox News Sunday* on March 1 that “my view has changed” on the issue, based on his conversations with governors in border states and others. He later took an even harder line, telling Glenn Beck that the “foremost” goal of the U.S. immigration system should be “protecting American workers and American

Take Walker’s job promise, which he made the centerpiece of his 2010 campaign. He didn’t say he’d try to add 250,000 new private-sector jobs; he said “I will” find ways to do so. “Is this a campaign promise something you want to be held to?” Walker was asked at the time. His answer: “Absolutely.”

In 2014, as it became clear he would fail on this promise, Walker concocted a sound bite for why he should not be held to it: “I don’t think the people of this state . . . are going to penalize somebody for aiming big.”

Walker has also switched positions on Common Core academic standards, from support to opposition, and on federal ethanol mandates, from opposition to support. But he will always be able to bat away charges that he is inconsistent, and on some level he’s right. Walker is, in fact, astonishingly consistent. He invariably says what he calculates is the right political answer—which changes, depending on the circumstances.

Take his pronouncements on right-to-work—making it illegal to

By September 2014, shortly before he cruised to re-election to a second full term, Walker’s firm opposition to right-to-work had softened to “I’m not pushing for it.” And then, in February, he pledged to sign a fast-tracked right-to-work bill. His new spin: “I’ve never said that I didn’t think it was a good idea.”

The bill passed, despite strong opposition from unions and even some businesses, and Walker signed it, saying doing so “sends a powerful message across the country and around the world.” Then he immediately began citing it in his fundraising appeals and stump speeches.

No one blows smoke better than Walker. In late 2013, I asked him about a GOP-backed bill to make it harder for the public to challenge public schools with “race-based nicknames, logos, mascots, and team names.” The highly contentious bill had passed the Legislature mostly along party lines after a state Senate session in which Republicans actually left the chamber while Democrats argued against it. Now it was before

Walker to veto or allow.

Walker said his contacts with the state's Native American tribes gave him "great empathy for the concerns they and others have raised about how offensive some of the nicknames and mascots are." He added: "If it were up to me personally, in any number of these cases, I would find a way to find a more viable alternative to the name or the mascot or the nickname the school had."

Two days later, Walker signed the bill into law. He laid the groundwork for his reasoning in our interview, when he spoke about "the free speech rights" of school districts "even if I disagree with what they're saying or how they're saying it." The head of the Wisconsin ACLU called the governor's argument "bogus." But Walker's spin, as usual, was masterful.

In Wisconsin, to "pull a Scott Walker" means to govern by surprise. He never said a word about his plan to smash public employees' unions until after he was elected and then claimed at a press conference, in response to a question I asked, that his intentions should have been obvious: "If anyone doesn't know what's coming, they've been asleep for the past two years."

Walker's thin basis for this broad claim was that he had pledged to balance the budget and "get this state working again." Later, in talking to the fake David Koch, he used the term "dropped the bomb" to describe his eventual announcement. He knew no one had any clue what was coming.

But there is no longer any excuse for being duped by Scott Walker. We

know enough about how he has governed to make reasonable predictions about what kind of President he would be.

Walker would put ideology above the public interest. In Wisconsin, he turned down \$810 million in federal stimulus money for a high-speed rail link between Milwaukee and Madison, forfeiting jobs and economic benefits to other states ("Thanks a billion, cheeseheads," chided a *Los Angeles Times* editorial). He is still rejecting federal health-care aid that could save the state up to \$345 million over the next two years while providing coverage to 80,000 more people.

He would, like his hero Ronald Reagan, engage in fabulism, mythologizing aspects of his own life (remember Reagan's apocryphal role in helping liberate Nazi concentration camps?) as well as the world he inhabits. He would employ brinkmanship without bluffing in imaginary battles of good versus evil.

Walker would divide the public by attacking labor and the poor. In Wisconsin, he has poured huge resources into fighting almost non-existent food assistance fraud and turned his push to drug-test recipients of public assistance into an applause line.

He would continue to curry favor with the gun lobby, as when he ended Wisconsin's forty-eight-hour waiting period on handgun purchases, over the strenuous objections of groups that work with victims of domestic violence, just days after the shooting deaths of nine churchgoers in Charleston, South Carolina.

Walker would slash public funding for education, at both the K-12 and university levels, and devise ways to funnel money from schools into the pockets of private providers. His most recent state budget does more of both.

He would fight sensible efforts to respond to the urgency of climate change. Walker, a signatory of a Koch Industries-backed pledge to "oppose any legislation relating to climate change that includes a net increase in government revenue," has undermined the development of renewable energy (no new Wisconsin wind turbines have been added since 2012) and sued the federal government over proposed new emissions standards. Walker, observed *Scientific American*, has "consistently dismissed science and sided with polluters."

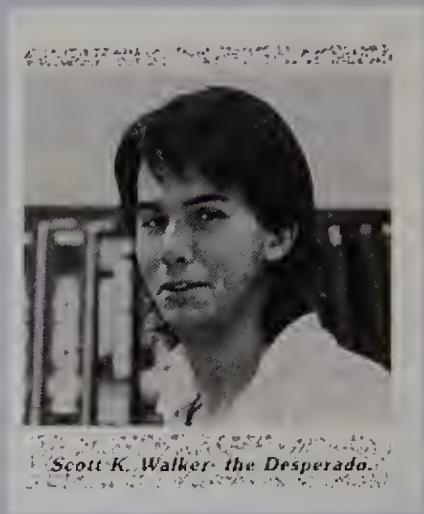
Walker, who is on record as opposing abortion even in cases of rape and incest, would continue to wage war on reproductive choice. He signed bills requiring that women seeking abortions receive a medically unnecessary ultrasound and imposing a ban on abortions after twenty weeks that prioritizes the life of a fetus over the health of the mother.

Walker, as President, would deliver these goods: dishonesty, division, conflict, war, refusal to compromise, failure to achieve economic aims, and endless political posturing. As he wrote in his book, "If we can do it in Wisconsin, we can do it anywhere—even in our nation's capital."

On that, there should be no doubt. ♦

Ten Fun Facts About SCOTT WALKER

1. A yearbook photo of Walker as a high school senior in Delavan, Wisconsin, bears the caption, "Scott K. Walker - the Desperado." He says the yearbook editor, a friend, ran this as a joke because "I was unshaven in that particular picture."
2. Walker is the first governor in U.S. history to survive a recall attempt, of the three who've been targeted. Ironically, one of Walker's own biggest breaks came in 2002, when he won election as Milwaukee County executive after the incumbent resigned amid a recall campaign.
3. Walker dropped out of Marquette University as a senior in 1990. If elected, he would be the first President since Harry Truman to lack a college degree. Walker, predictably, spins this deficit as an asset, reportedly saying "70 percent of the country is with him" in this regard.
4. In the 2010 governor's race, Walker's campaign spent \$11.1 million, compared to \$6.8 million by his Democratic rival. In the 2012 recall, his campaign spent \$36 million (more than five times his opponent), with two-thirds of his individual contributions coming from out-of-state. In his last election, in 2014, Walker and his running mate spent \$36 million, compared to \$17 million by their Democratic rivals. These totals do not include independent spending by outside groups.
5. Since mid-2008, Walker has personally donated a total of \$448.10 to Wisconsin state political candidates and causes. This includes \$100 reported by the Jefferson County Republican Party in 2013 for "5 autographed pictures = priceless."
6. Walker wrote in his book that among the many death threats he and his family received in 2011 was one threatening to "gut" his wife, Tonette, "like a deer." After he repeated this story to a gasping audience in Iowa earlier this year, the *Wisconsin State Journal* reported that state officials "have been unable to produce any record of this particular threat," although a former state police official said he remembered having seen it.
7. Scott and Tonette Walker left the Baptist church they joined in Wauwatosa after it voted to affiliate with a "gay-accepting" national church group. One parishioner told *The New York Times*, "Tonette said they were looking for a more family-friendly place"; Scott said they left for a church that had more children his sons' age.
8. Walker has refused to grant pardons, saying he does not want to second-guess the justice system; his five predecessors as Wisconsin governor pardoned more than 800 people. One notable refusal concerns Eric Pizer, a decorated military veteran who wants to become a cop—but must first erase a felony conviction for throwing a single punch that injured a man who threatened his friend. The man Pizer punched, by the way, has publicly forgiven him.
9. According to Walker's most recent Statement of Economic Interests, a required state ethics disclosure, he has less than \$100,000 in investments and between \$10,000 and \$100,000 in credit card debt. *The Boston Globe* has calculated his net worth at negative \$72,500. That makes him by far the poorest serious contender for President, followed by Bernie Sanders, worth \$330,000.
10. He's allergic to dogs. The last dogless President was Dwight Eisenhower. Ike had a parakeet.



— Bill Lueders

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Blue Jeans, Big Dreams

By Nathan J. Comp

Mike McCabe is speaking to about two-dozen mostly gray-haired people in the basement of the Ripon Public Library in Wisconsin, not far from the schoolhouse where a similarly sized group of disaffected voters gathered in 1854 to forge a new political party.

"They were politically homeless for a different reason," McCabe explains, with the gusto of a high school history teacher. "Neither party reflected their wish for the end of slavery, so they created a new identity for themselves. They started calling themselves Republicans."

In fact, McCabe continues, the arc of American history is dotted with moments in which ordinary people have set

in motion paradigm-shattering movements in pursuit of a government that works for them. He thinks the time has come again for citizens to rise up and reclaim at least one of America's two major parties, to reinvent it as an instrument for the common good.

"Right now, one party is scary and the other is scared," he tells the group. "The reason the scary party has become

Nathan J. Comp is a Madison-based freelance writer.

scarier is because they've been forced to become more subservient to the Koch brothers."

Heads nod; his message is resonating. Everyone here knows the role played by industrialists David and Charles Koch, who have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into backing Republicans who support their vision of an America in which workers are kept in their place and the wholesale reliance on fossil fuels is undiminished. And who have been remarkably successful.

But McCabe, an author and activist, is in Ripon not to bash the Koch brothers or to gripe about Republicans' sweeping electoral victories. His message is one of empowerment. When someone in the audience asks how he expects to overcome the apathy that has taken root among the electorate, he fires back: "Don't confuse apathy with a sense of powerlessness. The question is: How do we empower the disempowered?"

McCabe has an answer for that, as well.

"We've got to do away with old labels that no longer serve us," he says. "It starts by forging a new political identity, coming up with a new vocabulary, and unlearning how we've been conditioned to think about politics."

McCabe has an adman's knack for coining catchphrases and witticisms that capture long-intuited, but unarticulated, truths among disaffected voters. But he has his work cut out. Launching a political movement literally from nothing, it turns out, is every bit as difficult as it sounds.

"I've seen people become engaged, but I'm not sure he's reaching beyond the people who are already active politically," says Scott Spector, executive director of Wisconsin Progress, a nonprofit that recruits and trains progressive candidates to run in local elections. "They have a tough row to hoe in organizing the public around a set of issues."

Kathy Cramer Walsh, a political science professor at UW-Madison, is doubtful that a group like Blue Jean Nation can convince enough people the effort is worth their time to achieve the sweeping changes McCabe speaks of.

"There is so much skepticism about everything political these days that for a movement like that to succeed, there has got to be pretty widespread buy-in," she says. "It's hard enough to just get people's attention."

But McCabe, citing the lessons of history, is undaunted: "Past generations didn't beat organized money with

money, but by introducing very provocative ideas and an ambitious agenda."

As McCabe sees it, Blue Jean Nation is meant for people like himself who identify with the label "commoners." Originally, in seeking a movement symbol, he tried to think of an animal that people could rally around. But in the end blue jeans seemed a more apt way to capture the movement's ambitious goal of inclusion.

"Everyone can connect with it as a metaphor for common folks," he says. "It's a symbol to unite commoners against the royalty of American politics."

McCabe is seeking to pitch a broad tent. He's spoken not just to local political groups but to a Rotary Club luncheon in the conservative stronghold of Waukesha County, where Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker launched his presidential campaign. He argues that the appeal of his new political movement cuts across party lines.

"I'm finding a lot of Main Street Republicans are also feeling politically homeless," McCabe says. "They feel like their party has been stolen from them, too."

Since BlueJeanNation.com went live in early April, McCabe has spoken to dozens of groups, from high school students to AARP members. But given his book's rather savage critique of the Democratic Party, he was understandably nervous when the Chippewa County Democrats invited him to speak. He decided not to hold back.

"I told them that their party is failing," he recalls. He ended up getting a standing ovation. "Since then, I've spoken to three dozen county Democratic Party meetings and it's been a real eye-opener for me, because I'm telling them their party sucks. There is a canyon separating the party's rank and file and the establishment."

Blue Jean Nation is organized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, meaning it cannot endorse political candidates. It operates with a statewide network of volunteers. For the first several months, McCabe also worked as a volunteer, out of the basement of his Madison home. But recently the group's board approved a partial salary.

In addition to its eight-seat board of directors, McCabe has pulled together a statewide organizing committee of nearly four-dozen people. Still in its start-up phase, the committee aims to become the group's brain trust, serving as McCabe's eyes and ears on the street, while its

members return to their communities with fresh ideas for spreading the message.

In June, when the Democratic Party of Wisconsin held its annual convention in Milwaukee, many of the 1,300 delegates carried Blue Jean Nation signs or wore Blue Jean Nation buttons. Others wore Blue Jean Nation T-shirts that read, “Neither Elephant Nor Ass.”

At the convention, the delegates elected a new party chair, replacing the one in place during its three straight losses to Walker. Martha Laning, a fifty-two-year-old businesswoman and community activist from Sheboygan, was picked over the party establishment’s anointed candidate, Jason Rae, a political consultant from Milwaukee.

Though his group was not a major factor in driving this pick, McCabe sees it as a hopeful sign. “What just happened at the Democratic Party Convention was the first glimmer of change coming to the party,” he says. “There is a real hunger for change.”

Before spearheading his citizens’ movement, McCabe, fifty-five, was following the money trail in Wisconsin politics as executive director of Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, a nonprofit advocacy group where he worked for fifteen years before stepping down last year.

“I got tired of looking at the political landscape, and just seeing us slide further and further into a sinkhole,” he says. “I figured I could track money another fifteen years, but I didn’t see that doing it would be enough of a game changer.”

Raised on a dairy farm in Clark County, Wisconsin, which to this day is home to more cows than people, McCabe recalls politics being a frequent topic of conversation. His father, Chuck, grew up during the Depression and was shaped politically by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

“My dad had an eighth-grade education, but he had a long list of ways that FDR had helped him, saved his family, rescued them from the trauma of the Depression,” McCabe says. “You talk to people today and they’re at a loss to say what the Democrats have done for them.”

Today, Clark County is solidly Republican.

McCabe says the Democratic Party has been in decline his entire adult life, its last high-water mark being the Great Society years, when he was child. The party, in his

view, hasn’t put forth an ambitious agenda since.

Last year, he published *Blue Jeans in High Places: The Coming Makeover of American Politics*. Drawing heavily on his upbringing in Clark County and his long career as a professional whistleblower, McCabe’s populist manifesto is scathing indictment of politics in Wisconsin and throughout the land.

But the book argues that citizens have repeatedly been able to force the major parties to change how they act. “I think the trick is to adapt those instances to modern circumstances,” he says.

It’s a trick he set out to learn. He looked to the progressive movement of the early twentieth century, which never produced a viable third party but did force both major parties to adopt progressive agendas.

“It struck me that every single time we’ve had these political transformations, it started with people discarding old labels and fashioning themselves a new identity, starting with the birth of the Republican Party,” he says.

But what really lit the bulb was the Tea Party movement that, in a few short years, has had tremendous success influencing the Republican Party.

“The first thing that came to mind is, ‘That isn’t a party at all, it’s just a brand used to take over a party,’ ” he recalls. “The strategy behind it was that you could create a new brand, run candidates under that brand, and make the establishment subservient.”

But the Tea Party, notes McCabe, has from the start been funded largely by self-interested outsiders like the Koch brothers. “The Tea Party was never a spontaneous outburst of citizen discontent, it was always an Astroturf operation,” he says. “It also had the benefit of a major news network promoting it. It was very media driven.”

McCabe came to conclude that the movement’s winning strategy was surprisingly simple. “I started thinking, OK, this is a couple of billionaires, with the help of a national news network, trying to exert their will on a major party,” he says. “I thought, couldn’t ordinary citizens use the same strategy for a more public-spirited purpose?”

If Blue Jean Nation expects to mimic the Tea Party’s citizen-fed blitzkrieg, it will need to fold rural areas into its voting bloc. Cramer Walsh says that will mean reversing the perception of Democrats as big government spenders who don’t care about rural residents.

"There are a lot of reasons why people in small towns and rural places feel that big systems have abandoned them," she says. "Many rural folk don't see government as something that is ever going to help them."

In the Parade of Lights, held in the cities of Neenah-Menasha on July 3, Blue Jean Nation was represented by a float cobbled together by one of the group's board members and roughly fifteen other volunteers, who also passed out 2,000 informational fliers as the parade worked its way across two cities in east-central Wisconsin to Neil Diamond's "Forever in Blue Jeans."

"Blue Jean Nation is so new and different," says board member Katie Schierl. "For me, it's to get people elected who will work for the commoners."

Schierl's political awakening has occurred over the last year as she and other residents in the Neenah-Menasha area volunteered with the local chapter of Move to Amend, a movement aimed at reversing the 2010 *Citizens United* U.S. Supreme Court ruling that allowed corporations to pour unlimited amounts of money into the political process.

When someone she met in that movement was surprised she didn't know who Mike McCabe was, she got a copy of his book. "I was on board right away," she recalls. "But that's not to say I get all of it. It's a big challenge to change a mindset. It isn't clear-cut like Move to Amend is."

Mark Taylor has the sort of eclectic political pedigree essential to McCabe's movement. For several years in the 1960s, his father served as president of Madison's chapter of the John Birch Society. Now Taylor is co-chair of the Vernon County Democratic Party in western Wisconsin.

In August 2014, Taylor was in La Crosse for a showing of *Citizen Koch*, a documentary on the Koch brothers' political puppeteering so blistering that it was dropped after initial support by PBS, which receives major funding from David Koch. He stayed afterward to hear McCabe speak.

"The number-one thing that resonated with me is the concept of political homelessness," Taylor says. "The Democratic Party has, in the best of circumstances, been inept and too often collaborative with the forces of oppression."

Taylor, who also writes about state politics on his blog, The Daily Call, says many grassroots Democrats believe

McCabe's strategy is the most likely way for them to wrest control from the party establishment.

"We need to do what Fighting Bob did to the Republican Party," he says. "It's coming down to a real critical time. Progressives and political radicals need to get active and start speaking up."

At the meeting in Ripon, those in attendance have a lot of questions. A white-haired lady in the front row wants to know more about McCabe's call to answer boatloads of special-interest money with provocative ideas. Specifically, she asks, "Where are we going to get these provocative ideas from?"

McCabe responds with a story. He says that if she took a drive on the dirt road that passes by the old McCabe family farm, she would see wires strung to every house and barn. Those electric lines, he explains, weren't strung by the electric utility, which wasn't going to take on the expense of stringing another mile of power line just so another family could light their home at night.

"It took a national effort, in the form of the Rural Electrification Act," he says. "Go out there and you'll have electricity, but you won't get a cellphone signal or an Internet connection. Why isn't anyone talking about a digital version of the Rural Electrification Act? How about universal access to cellphone signals?"

McCabe is just getting started. "Where are the voices saying we need to make education as affordable for future generations as past generations had made it for us?" He notes that Walker and the Republicans froze college tuition in Wisconsin for two years. "Where are the voices saying we're going to do away with tuition?"

McCabe notes that the Republican Party has succeeded in drumming up resentments among both rural and suburban voters toward the "tax-and-spend liberals" in Madison and Milwaukee. But, he says, "A pretty magical thing happens when you flip that on its head. Instead of thinking who is liberal and who is conservative, you look at it vertically and ask who is on top and who is at the bottom, and you see that the rural and urban voters are at the exact same spot."

Again, it is a message that resonates. "That inversion was like an epiphany," a woman in the back row says afterward. "It blew me away when I heard it." ♦

How Can Labor Overcome?

By Sarah Jaffe



When Hillary Clinton addressed a group of fast-food workers in Detroit this summer, it was a clear sign that something has changed. For decades, unions have been losing ground, both in membership and in political clout. The insurgent Fight for \$15 movement is transforming the landscape, and showing how labor might regain traction on an unequal playing field.

Sarah Jaffe is a reporting fellow at The Nation Institute and co-host of Dissent magazine's "Belabored" podcast. You can follow her on Twitter @sarahljaffe and find her work at www.adifferentclass.com. Her book on social movements since the 2008 financial crisis will be out in 2016.

“Thank you for marching in the streets to get that living wage,” Clinton told the crowd of 1,300 fast-food workers as she campaigned for President. “We need you out there leading the fight against those who would rip away Americans’ right to organize, to collective bargaining, to fair pay.”

Though Clinton did not endorse a \$15-an-hour national minimum wage, her appearance made headlines. A representative of Fight for \$15, which is backed by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), said that while Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Martin O’Malley were not asked to speak, both have called for a \$15 wage.

“All the major Democratic candidates for President have spoken out in support of workers fighting for \$15 and the right to a union,” says Kendall Fells, organizing director for Fight for \$15. “Fifteen is a winning political issue. Raising pay for hard-working Americans has always been a winning political issue. The Fight for \$15 encourages political candidates from all parties to stand up for higher pay and the right to a union.”

The movement began in November 2012 with a one-day strike by a couple hundred New York workers demanding \$15-an-hour pay and the right to organize a union. It has since spread across the country, as two dozen cities and a handful of states, deep red ones like Nebraska as well as liberal cities like San Francisco, have passed local measures to boost the minimum wage.

Through workplace action and

coordinated protest, the movement has turned an ambitious demand into political reality, drawing politicians like New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay, neither of whom are generally considered progressive stalwarts, to endorse its major aim.

As the 2016 elections loom, the labor movement faces a critical question: How can it turn such expressions of support into political power?

Organized labor may be due for a rebound, after the drubbing it’s taken in the recent past. Union density is down to just 11.1 percent of the workforce, from 20 percent in 1983; nearly half the remaining union jobs are in the public sector. Conservatives like Governor Scott Walker in Wisconsin as well as corporate-friendly Democrats like Mayor Rahm Emanuel in Chicago have made bashing unions and forcing concessions on workers into a calling card, and all too often they’ve won.

While labor spent hundreds of millions on Barack Obama and Democrats in 2008 and 2012, its key political issue, the Employee Free Choice Act, went nowhere, shoved aside for health-care reform. And though many Democrats have paid lip service to the pain U.S. workers have felt from trade deals that decimated jobs at home, the same old trade policies continue and new deals are on the horizon.

With Walker and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie on the campaign trail, and the Supreme Court soon to consider the *Friedrichs v.*

California Teachers Association case, which could take away public-sector unions’ ability to fund themselves through the fair-share fees paid by those who benefit from their protections, labor has more at risk than ever.

But if we’ve learned anything from the past decades of watching labor pump money into Democratic coffers only to see those same Democrats pass NAFTA, deregulate Wall Street, and even debate cutting Social Security, it’s that the same old plan of just supporting Democrats because the other option is worse isn’t working. Making endorsements and shelling out cash in the hope of some reciprocal loyalty has backfired too many times. The other side always has more cash to spend.

There is no simple fix to the fundamental problem unions face—that the business class would prefer they didn’t exist, and the political structure mostly listens to the business class.

Fight for \$15 and OUR Walmart (an organizing effort of the United Food and Commercial Workers) have begun to change the calculus. Rather than courting support from politicians, the movement has been engaging a highly public effort to gain support among the broader, nonunionized public. The nonunionized workers of these campaigns have struck, rallied, and pressured politicians to act on their demands rather than asking them nicely.

They have succeeded in making their demand a central focus of this election cycle, an issue that Democrats looking for political goodwill

reach for—as embattled Cuomo did, for example, empaneling a wage board that called for the fast-food industry minimum wage to be raised to \$15.

Other demands of the labor movement, such as paid sick days and paid family leave, have also made their way into Democratic candidates' platforms, a sign that issues important to workers are having a bit of a moment. Campaigns like the Fight for \$15, capitalizing on the energy begun with Wisconsin's uprising and Occupy Wall Street, have helped put labor's demands back on the table, but labor is still looking for a way to turn that shift into organizational strength.

"Our political power should flow from our workplace power rather than the other way around," says Damon Silvers, AFL-CIO director of policy and special counsel. It is significant that the Fight for \$15 and other similar campaigns are winning real victories for millions of workers, not just for union members, and are winning them through action in the workplace and in the street.

But that power still flows, Silvers points out, from organizing campaigns staffed and funded by existing labor unions, and those unions remain under very real threats to their funding bases and their very existence. If existing unions are destroyed before something new is created, there will be no base on which to build political campaigns.

Labor must do more than hang its hopes on a new Democratic administration in the White House

or the statehouses—it must find a way to build its base back up, to devise new ways to bring workers into the movement, and make even more elected officials decide which side they are on.

Organized labor showed a sudden surge of power during the fight over the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a massive twelve-country trade deal occasionally referred to, disparagingly, as "NAFTA on steroids."

President Obama pushed for "fast track" trade promotion authority on the deal. That would allow the executive branch, for the next six years, to negotiate trade deals on its own, with nothing but a simple majority-rule vote on the end result within ninety days, with no amendments allowed.

The labor movement, burned by NAFTA and other trade deals that helped corporations ship jobs overseas to workers with fewer job protections, fiercely opposed fast track as well as the TPP deal itself. And for a little while it looked like unions and their allies might have won over enough Democrats to stop the TPP. The happiness was short-lived, though, as the Senate passed fast track at the end of June, with thirteen Democrats voting in favor, along with most Republicans.

Despite this loss, it is significant that the vast majority of Democrats stood with liberal stalwarts Senators Sherrod Brown, Elizabeth Warren, and Bernie Sanders in opposing fast-track, including several Dems who had been thought of as pro-corporate in the recent past.

The key to this shift, says Silvers,

was long-term alliance-building with various subsets of what's normally thought of as the progressive base: environmental organizations and immigrants rights groups, the "Netroots," and more. Those alliances were based on a better understanding, in recent years, of the issues of wage stagnation and economic inequality, which have come to the fore since the 2008 financial crisis.

Important, too, Silvers says, is the fact that "we had really broad and deep unity within the labor movement on this fight." While unions often disagree on political candidates and even big issues (the Keystone XL pipeline, for example), on this trade deal there was little dissension in the ranks.

A united front matters—for one thing, it helps labor look like what it should be, a broad-based movement with the interests of all working people at heart. When labor is split, it can be divided and conquered. The more nonunion workers see unions standing up for their interests, the more they will want to be part of the labor movement.

And these issues matter beyond any one trade deal, even one as far-reaching as the TPP. The coalition built and strengthened around trade, Silvers says, "underlies what the labor movement is trying to do in this moment in American politics, which is to insist upon a conversation about the structural changes that we need to make in our country in order to address runaway economic inequality and to raise wages."

Over the long term, the success of labor may hinge on its willingness to pressure and even break with powerful Democrats.

That willingness was on display in the trade fight, as labor challenged the President, and in so doing won over Congressional Democrats. And it was on display in Chicago's recent mayoral election, where a coalition of unions and community groups took on Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Obama's former chief of staff, forcing a runoff that nearly unseated the man some call "Mayor 1 Percent."

At first, no one wanted to run against Emanuel, who has deep pockets from his Wall Street connections and is known for fighting dirty. Popular Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle declined to run, as did others.

Then Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis stepped up to the plate. Lewis, who led the 2012 strike viewed as a big win for the teachers' union, had a broad and enthusiastic base of support in the city.

"That's when many organizations started coming together to really think about what a campaign to elect her might look like," says Amisha Patel, executive director of Grassroots Collaborative and the affiliated Grassroots Illinois Action.

Lewis was diagnosed with a brain tumor that kept her from running, but the organizers who had seen a real possibility of taking on Emanuel were not willing to let go of the idea. Jesús "Chuy" Garcia, a member of the Cook County Board

of Commissioners, stepped in for Lewis. Propelled by a fierce grassroots campaign, he gave Rahm a run for his money.

From the coalition that opposed the mayor was born United Working Families, a new political organization that Patel believes could become a legitimate base of power for Chicago's left.

Even though Emanuel ultimately won, the grassroots movement that opposed him helped bring new progressive members to the Chicago City Council, including Chicago Teachers Union member Susan Sadlowski-Garza. It was inspiring, Patel said, to see regular people across the city throw themselves into a political campaign, many for the first time.

"There was this tenable energy across the city that was very new and vibrant," she says. United Working Families is now busy developing more candidates, and supporting bold issue campaigns (it managed to win a minimum wage hike from Emanuel in the midst of the campaign).

For Patel, the challenge will be to maintain a "very clear, radical, left ideology." As she puts it, "We are really good at saying what we are against, but how do we paint the picture of what we are for?"

One of the biggest challenges for organized labor is that it has tended, for years, to err on the safe side, to repeat the same techniques even when they show diminishing returns, to put faith in Democrats who have shown little interest in

coming through for them. But one of the lessons of recent years is that you can win a lot by losing.

Just ask Kshama Sawant, who ran a losing campaign in 2012 for the Washington state legislature as a socialist, before the victory that put her on Seattle's city council and brought her to national attention in 2013. Sawant was one of the earliest candidates to pick up on the \$15-an-hour demand as a compelling campaign slogan, and her willingness to stake out the left position helped push now-Mayor Ed Murray to endorse the demand, as well. In the end, Seattle became the first big city to put this idea into law.

It was worker organizing that created the demand for \$15, and it was worker organizing that made it a demand that politicians were willing to endorse. And so, ultimately, as the presidential election draws closer and the candidates come circling for endorsements, dollars, and the most important gift labor has to give—trained troops for organizing and door-knocking—it is crucial to remember that labor's power does not come from the same place that the Koch brothers' does. It does not come from dollars, but from organized people.

As Damon Silvers says, the last five years have proved that there is no substitute for genuine worker organizing. From Chicago to Seattle to Washington, D.C., the best power that unions have is their ability to take bold action to defend workers' rights in the workplace and in the street, as well as in the ballot box. ♦



First Person Singular
By Ashana Bigard

New Orleans Ten Years After Katrina



I am a parent of three, a black New Orleanian with roots going back at least five generations. I think of myself as a glass-half-full kind of person. I'm usually happy and optimistic.

But when I talk about what has happened to my city, I become angry. Not the polite, upper-class, northern white lady clutching her pearls kind of angry, but the Bible Belt South, black woman from New Orleans angry. It's the straw-that-broke-the-camel's-back kind of angry, the kind of angry that breathing exercises and yoga can't erase.

If you listen to our esteemed mayor, Mitch Landrieu, everything is going wonderfully in New Orleans, ten years after the city was devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

We are a model of how to rebuild after a natural disaster. Our job growth after the storm was almost the highest in the country (though lately it has returned to normal). We have new school structures. We have new charter operators. Billions of dollars in new funds poured into a city of less than 400,000 people. So we're doing well, right?

Well, a lot of money did come into the city. And some people did get jobs. And, yes, new schools have opened. But pay attention to who is getting jobs and who is not.

When all eyes turned to New Orleans ten years ago, I thought, finally, people will see the poverty, people will see the income inequality, and things will change.

Some of our school buildings were more than 100 years old, with falling ceilings, and walls and floors eaten through by termites. We had mold in our schools long before the flood, and damaged roofs that leaked whenever there was a hard rain. We had schools built for air conditioning and heating that have not been heated or cooled since the 1980s.

We had income inequality on a scale that should not exist in a civilized country, especially one of the wealthiest countries on earth. We had people who worked hard their whole entire lives and couldn't afford to buy a house. We had people who had made a generational investment of hard work, sweat, and tears in this city,

but due to racism, racist systems, and racist structures of oppression, were never able to break out of the cycle of generational poverty.

But, still, we had a culture in which people loved and supported each other. We took care of each other the best we could. Yes, the crime rate was high. It was as high as any place where people are hungry, and their hopes denied.

Going back to my hopeful naivety, I believed that things would change for the better. When I heard about all of the people coming together who wanted to help New Orleans, I was excited. So what happened?

Today, about half of working-age black males in New Orleans are employed. Many others, cut out of the rebuilding process, have left the city. New Orleans's black community has shrunk by about 30 percent since the hurricane.

I belong to several organizations and coalitions, including one called Justice and Beyond. It is a coalition of ministers, union leaders, masons, electricians, teachers, cooks, and community members from all over. Most of us are native New Orleanians. I have been able to see who has benefited in the post-Katrina era, and who has not.

Despite all the construction of new schools and hospitals, black contractors from New Orleans are not being hired to rebuild in our community. Instead, companies from other states bring in undocumented labor. They pay their workers less so they can profit from our disaster. Local companies who paid a living wage could not outbid them, so most of our companies did not get contracts rebuilding our own community. Those excluded are middle-class, unionized professionals who have been doing this kind of work most of their lives.

And it's not just construction jobs. New Orleans has

something called “Hollywood South,” where films, television shows, and major motion pictures are made. Production companies get big fat tax breaks, paid for by the citizens of New Orleans. However, the majority of people who work on the sets—not counting the extras like Mardi Gras Indians and jazz musicians, when they need an authentic New Orleans scene—are producers, writers, set designers, even caterers from outside of the city.

After the storm, the already huge economic gap between whites and blacks in New Orleans widened, by 18 percent, according to an Urban League report. Between 2005 and 2013, the median white household income in New Orleans rose from \$49,262 to \$60,553, compared to an increase of just \$23,394 to \$25,102 for African Americans. And the number of black children living in poverty also rose, from 44 percent in 2005 to 50.5 percent in 2013.

Even before Katrina struck the city on August 29, 2005, the schools of New Orleans were dilapidated. In the aftermath of the disaster, I participated in what felt like a hundred processes with parents and community members talking about what they would like to see happen, now that we had the opportunity to rebuild our schools. I thought we would be heard.

Forty percent of people who died in Hurricane Katrina died by drowning. We knew that other states had pools in schools, and that teaching children to swim was a part of everyday curriculum for millions of children across the United States. However, even though we live in a city below sea level and are surrounded by water, the people who designed our schools forgot to put in pools. That mistake could be easily corrected with the billions of dollars coming in. It hasn't been.

Many young people in our communities, even before the storm, had trauma disorders. Because of the storm, that number has increased. All of our children and families were in need of counseling, therapy, and other services which we could use the schools to deliver. We wanted a psychologist in every school. That didn't happen.

We wanted programs to address racial oppression and teach our children to understand racist structures and how to navigate them. We would rebuild in such

a way that our children could finally break the cycle of poverty, by creating entrepreneur programs, funding high-school tech programs that gave students certificates for learning to rewire computers, make apps, and other technical skills.

We would train our teachers in new, innovative ways to reach children with different needs. We would create schools that had free child care, not just for teenagers but also for busy parents. We would have health-care facilities near the schools. We would have solar power, hydropower, and other alternative energy plans.

We would have programs where students and our community would come up with ways to creatively intervene and create new solutions for the city. We would pay community members from the city to come into the schools and help teach the children restorative justice through peer-to-peer counseling.

We would have the children rediscover the richness in their own communities by learning about the spoken word from Sunni Patterson and Asia Rainey. They would study photographs with great local artists like Saddi Khali, while cultural workers like Wendi O'Neal would teach them storytelling and spiritual ancestral songs. They would have trainers to do history and diversity trainings.

We wanted schools where youth and community members could produce media from a multimedia hub. We were going to recreate schools that were already working. We were going to hire dozens to hundreds of other people from the community to teach based on what the community needed and to develop a community hub and beacon for other cities to follow.

What actually happened was this: The state raised the cut-score on standardized tests, and took over all the schools in Orleans Parish, an area that is predominantly black. It fired all of the teachers, counselors, and administrators. Then Teach for America came in, because we suddenly had a teacher shortage. Huh, I wonder how that happened?

Teaching is a profession that requires a four-year degree and classroom training. New Orleans embraced the notion that all you need to be a teacher here is to be really smart, preferably white and from someplace else.

Then, with four weeks of training you could come to a city with a devastated populace and properly educate children. Today, what we see a lot of in New Orleans are D and low-C operators getting more schools to run. Most of the charter operators and boards are white and from outside the city.

And children are being put out of schools. When I worked at Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children, we actually tried to pass legislation to prevent children in kindergarten through fourth grade from being suspended for uniform violations like a wrong colored belt or a white checkmark on an otherwise black shoe. After a lot of work, with heavy legislative education, it passed both houses of the legislature, only to be vetoed by our governor, Bobby Jindal.

In charter schools in New Orleans, children can be suspended for anything. The most common transgression is willful disobedience. That can be coughing, laughing, picking up a pencil, or looking at the teacher the wrong way. My own eight-year-old daughter was suspended for bringing a doll to school.

I could go on and on about how education has failed

the children of New Orleans. I could tell you about roughly 15,000 young people between sixteen and twenty-four who are not working or in school. They are called opportunity youth. We most definitely had an opportunity to help them. But in every way we failed them.

With all of this bad news, there is good news. The good news is that there are people who are trying to address the challenges of the moment, having real conversations about race and economic justice, about elitism and hope. The good news is that we have another ten years to start doing this right.

I'm still optimistic that all of these conversations will lead to policy action and action on an individual level.

We have an opportunity to look at New Orleans as a model of what not to do to people. We have the opportunity to be a real model of rebuilding.

I hope you will join me in this quest. I'm optimistic that together we can make New Orleans into a place that tells the story of a culture that was almost destroyed, of people who were almost left behind, but who then came together to make a victory for all. ♦

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Understanding the Middle East

An Interview with Juan Cole

By Amitabh Pal

Juan Cole is a prominent and prolific commentator on international affairs. A professor at the University of Michigan, he has written a number of highly acclaimed books on the Middle East and South Asia.

But it is through his blog, Informed Comment, that Cole has made himself well heard. Launched in 2002, it has acquired a large following. He has become a frequent guest on television and radio and is published regularly in a range of media outlets.

Cole's prominence and outspokenness has also attracted some undesired attention. The Bush Administration spied on Cole. And Yale University denied him

an appointment even after he had been approved by its history and sociology departments.

Cole spent a portion of his childhood in what is now Eritrea (then a part of Ethiopia). After obtaining his undergraduate degree from Northwestern University, he went to Beirut for graduate work but had to leave when the Lebanese civil war broke out. Instead, he got a master's from the American University in Cairo and

Amitabh Pal is the managing editor of The Progressive and the author of "Islam" Means Peace: Understanding the Muslim Principle of Nonviolence Today.

then a Ph.D. from UCLA. Cole is fluent in a number of Middle Eastern and South Asian languages, and knows French, German, and Spanish.

I met Cole on campus in Ann Arbor. After lunch at a restaurant near the university, we retired to his office, where we spoke about his life and work, the Middle East, the upcoming presidential elections, and what it felt like to be a target of the Bush Administration.

Q: Your blog is a must-read for anyone interested in international issues. How did you get it started?

Cole: After 9/11, I got drawn into being a public intellectual, just because I had lived in Egypt and Pakistan and had followed Pakistan-Afghanistan politics and Middle Eastern politics for twenty years. I had kept an eye on Al Qaeda—I knew what it was and knew something about its history.

People started asking me questions, especially on e-mail round robins I participated in. I tried to answer them, and the answers became quite popular. I began archiving them on a website in the spring of 2002. Over time, I developed a small readership. But then, the Bush Administration decided to invade Iraq. It so happened that I had written academic journal articles about Iraq. I was one of the few Americans who had taken an interest in that subject.

After the fall of the Saddam Hussein government, the Shiites came out and did their processions. Some of the clerics, like Muqtada al-Sadr, started mobilizing. Journalists in the United States were puzzled. I started writing things on the web on all this, and they went viral on me. I got invitations to come on TV—*PBS NewsHour*, even Fox News. I became the go-to person, especially for Iraqi Shiite affairs, but also Iraqi politics in general.

The Iraq War, the war on terror—these were right-wing narratives. If the right was able to get them into play, typically it was an advantage for them politically, whereas I had a left-of-center take. I can't tell you how grateful the American left was for my point of view on it. But many conservatives also linked to my blog just because they felt the information was good. The hits started taking off. In the spring of 2004, that April when

the United States was fighting the Mahdi Army in Iraq, I had a million page views. I had never had a million of anything.

Q: In a perverse way, the Bush Administration acknowledged your influence by spying on you.

Cole: During the Bush era, news about my appearances in Washington annoyed somebody in the White House, probably someone on the National Security Council. That person at some point, probably in late 2005, contacted the CIA and asked them to look into me and, beyond that, asked them to find dirt on me, to find some way to destroy my reputation: Did I use drugs? Was I an alcoholic? Did I have some personal failings? They seemed to have a pretty old-fashioned view of what would destroy a person. [Laughs.]

Apparently, the field officers inside the CIA who were asked to do this rebelled because they knew it was illegal to ask the CIA to spy on American citizens on American soil. When Obama came into office, some officials went to *The New York Times*. They thought it was important that the public know that this had been done. The ACLU very kindly took my case, and we ran some FOIA requests. The inspector general of the CIA did an investigation. But these things are done orally and by telephone calls. The inspector general said he couldn't find any paper trail.

It's kind of chilling to think of a big agency like that and somebody high up in the White House trying to use the engines of government to destroy a critic.

Q: What are your thoughts on the Obama Administration's policy toward the Middle East and South Asia?

Cole: The problem with the Obama Administration is that it really hasn't had a consistent policy. Just to give you an example: When the Houthi rebels came into Sana'a last September and upset the applecart in Yemen in a major way, they were viewed by Saudi Arabia, a neighbor of Yemen, as proxies of Iran. So the Saudis started their bombing campaign. Secretary of State John Kerry came out and said that we support this campaign

"It hasn't always been the case that politics has been organized around the Sunni-Shia divide. . . . There's a kind of journalistic trope that they're fighting like this for 1,400 years. That's not true."

and that we're providing logistical support. Of course, if you bomb urban areas, you kill civilians. There have been a lot of noncombatant deaths, including women and children. So, Kerry then came out and said, "We're disturbed." Which is it, guys? Are you supporting the campaign or not?

I was recently in Qatar at an Al Jazeera forum, and the word there among Arab intellectuals and policy-makers was that the Americans were not reliable and that they even seemed to have a slight bias toward Iran. I don't think that's true, but that's the way it's being perceived in the region. They seem all over the place with any policy they adopt, and then they anger all sides.

Q: What's your reaction to the Iran nuclear agreement and the GOP's response?

Cole: The Iran deal is a breakthrough in nonproliferation and in diplomatic solutions to conflict. It will end debilitating sanctions on Iran that have imposed genuine hardship on ordinary people. It is not clear whether the American right, openly eager for a war instead, can derail it in Washington. But that is sort of irrelevant, since the rest of the world will likely ignore any continued U.S. sanctions and eagerly seek business deals in Tehran.

Q: The violence between the Shias and the Sunnis, the adherents of the two major branches of Islam, is like nothing we've experienced in the modern era. What accounts for this?

Cole: It hasn't always been the case that politics has been organized around the Sunni-Shia divide. The Ottoman Empire, which preceded the modern Middle East, was a multicultural empire. In the twentieth century, most struggles were over imperialism and getting rid of the colonial empires. Or they were class struggles. Sunnism and Shi'ism didn't play a big role, and, indeed, you

very seldom heard much about those religious issues. There's a kind of journalistic trope that they're fighting like this for 1,400 years. That's not true.

In a place like Syria, where people are talking about Sunni-Shiite battles, it only looks like that from 30,000 feet. If you get down on the ground, it's not about sectarianism. The demonstrations that kicked off the struggle in 2011 were about farmers not having enough water for their crops because of drought, or they were unemployment protests or youth protests. When the regime fired tank shells into peaceful protests and put snipers on roofs who shot people down, then the rebellious youth picked up a gun and went to war. When you go to war, things polarize. People didn't start out that way.

Q: What's your take on ISIS or ISIL?

Cole: These kinds of radical cults grow up only when central authority has collapsed. The ending of the conflict and the restoration of central rule will cause them to be gotten rid of.

In Iraq, the rise of ISIL has to do with the invidious and unfair nature of the regime that the Americans set up. The most religious right among the Shiites came to power. Then they fired the Sunnis. Of course, the Sunnis turned to resistance, both against the Americans and the Shiite government. The government was bombing them or using hard-line Shiite militias to fight them. So when ISIL came to them and said we can rescue you from the Shiites, they were receptive.

The Sunnis of Iraq are quite secular, mind you. So, it's not like somebody pitched the caliphate to them and they said, "Gee, we have to have that!" It was more that these fighters showed up with guns and said, "We can protect you."

Q: And U.S. military action cannot solve the problem?

Cole: In the end, the Iraqis have to get their act together. The rollback can't happen without two developments. The Iraqi Army has to get a better esprit de corps. And the Baghdad government has to find a way to reach out and incorporate the Sunnis.

Q: What about in Syria?

Cole: In Syria, it's a mess because the regime took this genocidal path and has completely alienated a third to a half of the country, mainly the Sunni Arab areas. That's driven a polarization. Al Qaeda and ISIL have emerged as the two main guerrilla groups fighting the regime. This is a huge dilemma. You can't support the Ba'ath regime in Syria. That's a regime of mass murderers. On the other hand, you wouldn't want ISIL to sweep into Damascus the way they swept into Mosul. There's no side here for the Americans. So, I'm stymied. This is a moral quandary.

Q: Why is distrust of Islam and Muslims so high right now in this country, and how do you counter that?

Cole: Rightwing politics in America depends on the establishment of social hierarchies: rich people over poor people, white people over minorities. In the past, they used to have a problem of getting working-class people to vote for this ideology. One of the ways they did that was to scare them with communism. With the fall of the Soviet Union, that bogeyman evaporated.

People on the right were upset: How do you get working-class people to support an agenda that benefits big corporations? Well, you could scare them with race, and the resurgence of racism is partly a result. And then you can scare them with menacing foreigners, and that's been a favorite tactic, as well. This is quite clear on Rupert Murdoch's media, such as Fox News. It is quite cynical.

The Muslim American community needs to offset these tendencies by speaking out more. If the Muslim American community wants to develop a voice, it has to have a public presence, including elected officials and journalists and academics who are considered to have standing to speak in public and who can counter the very

dangerous lies that are being told.

Q: I wanted you to talk about your excellent recent book *The New Arabs*, which provides a contrarian optimistic view of the Arab Spring. Do you still stand by its optimism?

Cole: I was pleasantly surprised, as many were, by the outbreak of the youth revolutions in the Middle East in 2011 and after. As I observed these youth revolutions, I thought that a lot of them were doing innovative politics and critical thinking. So my book is about the emergence of a new generation of young Arabs—who are self-conscious about being a new generation. We forgot how young they were. A lot of them were twenty in 2011. They were interested in a new kind of politics that wasn't hierarchical and that wasn't party based. Many of their demands were for various kinds of personal liberties. There was a desire for forms of government that allowed for popular input.

As a historian, I find the instant analysis of the Middle East and the impatience to be a little puzzling. Take the French Revolution. Look at all the forms the French government took in the subsequent century: empires, restored monarchies, restored republics. I think the Middle East is likely to be as turbulent as France. Things won't settle out for a long time. Remember we are only four years into this set of events.

Q: For a historian, you do a lot of on-the-ground reporting. You traveled to Egypt, Tunisia, and even Libya when you were writing your book. What did you find?

Cole: The wonderful thing about writing contemporary history is that you can go there. You can't go to eighteenth-century France.

So, I hung out in Tahrir Square. There was this ferment, and it was mainly coming from the Egyptian left. That is one of the things I've tried to emphasize in this book: Most analysts are obsessed with Muslim movements in a way that causes them to distort what's going on in the region, and they're ignoring what I would call the Arab new left. I despair sometimes about getting

through to people, because the Muslim fundamentalist movements get all the press, and Americans tend to have this assumption that they're what's important.

Q: What did you see in Libya?

Cole: I was in Libya in May and June of 2012, more than half a year after Gaddafi had fallen. At that time, Libya was fine. You could see some dangerous signals in the form of youth militias. They were never demobilized. This was the great tragedy.

When I was there, I walked around freely. In the evening, I saw children in the playgrounds. The shops were open late, including the gold shops. My experience in Beirut was that the first thing that happens when there's trouble is that gold merchants close up and move the stuff to a secret warehouse. Things seemed to be going well at the time. History unfolds in path-dependent ways. Libya could have gotten through without a lot of trouble if people had been willing to compromise, and if the right policies had been adopted toward those militias.

Q: What sparked the movements? You've written about the turn toward neoliberal free-market policies in Tunisia and Egypt. How did that contribute?

Cole: Neoliberalism is a theory that became popular in the United States in the late 1970s. It holds that, in almost any sphere in life, the market is better at arranging things than the state is. This is a crackpot theory that is manifestly untrue.

After the end of World War II, most of the Arab republics adopted a kind of communism-lite. In communism, 95 percent of the economy was owned by the government; in Egypt, it was 50 percent. It wasn't the same in Tunisia, but there were a number of other countries like that, such as Syria. These countries got into debt over time. The donors adopted neoliberal policies and twisted their arms to privatize. It was done in a very corrupt way.

So, instead of an efficient market, you got cronyism and a monopoly market. This was the opposite of

what the neoliberal theories promised. It created large amounts of unemployment and blocked the youth from advancing economically. As any historian will tell you, you never want a large number of educated unemployed in your society, because they then get up to mischief. The way that neoliberalism worked out in these formerly socialist countries contributed to the explosions that led to the events of 2011.

Q: What do you make of the current crop of presidential candidates' Middle East policies?

Cole: All the Republican candidates, with the exception of Rand Paul, have articulated a much more interventionist policy. Their rationale is that we aren't intervening enough. Whether the world will look the same to them once they get into office, I can't tell.

Hillary Clinton is also more of a hawk than Obama. As Secretary of State, she wanted to give more arms to the Syrian rebels and intervene in Syria early on. She and the CIA agreed on this, but they were blocked by Obama.

The signs so far are that we're in for more intense engagement in the Middle East than under Obama.

Q: What's your advice for progressives?

Cole: The American political system is so arranged that there's a progressive majority in the United States that's put in a minority box. I don't know if presidential politics is really the place where the progressive movement can be the most effective. Working locally may be more fruitful.

Just to give an example: If, from the grassroots, from the municipal and county level, we can kick-start a renewable energy revolution in the United States, in ten years, all that Middle East gas and oil may not be all that important: This would have a major effect on our foreign policy. If you can democratize our energy—make it renewable, make it more local—then the forces in the corporate world and in the U.S. government that are tied to oil and gas distribution around the world will have less grounds for caring for those kinds of geopolitical interventions. So, that's my advice: Go local, go green. ♦

Morning Line on the GOP Dark Horses



When Pat Schroeder entered the Democratic primary, upping the 1988

presidential field to eight, this exceedingly enormous aggregate was immediately ridiculed as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Yet, today we hear not one word about Carly Fiorina and the others as Snow White and the Sixteen Dwarfs.

Consider this the Morning Line on The 17 Dark Horses of the Apocalypse. And Down The Stretch They Come!

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal. **50-1.** Tends to shy away when bright lights switch on. Needs early stumbles by leaders.

Neurosurgeon Ben Carson. **4,000-1.** Maiden race on any track. Not guaranteed to know which way to face coming out of gate. Could scare other horses into energy-sapping sprint.

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie. **40-1.** Bred to like turf. Runs with all the grace of a tumbling dumpster, but has knack to get where he wants to go, and the crowd adores him. Of course, the crowd also adores double-glazed, donut bacon burgers. As does he.

Florida Senator Marco Rubio. **10-1.** Fresh spirit stands out

in older company. Best chance is to force pace to a Latin beat.

Former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina. **100-1.** Outsider's outside shot dims daily. Only filly GOP interested in is Barbara Bush. Not as a runner, but as a dam.

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker. **8-1.** Strong finisher but

side draw. Runs risk of disqualification for barking at officials.

Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee. **25-1.** Solid in early speed. Tends to sag in long run. Come to think of it, tends to sag in the medium run as well.

Former Texas Governor Rick Perry. **40-1.** Lost some zip after donning blinders. New shoes don't help. Counting on an act of God. One mean God.

Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum. **100-1.** Not fast but will run all day and doesn't care if course turns into a three-day steeple-chase. Prefers it.

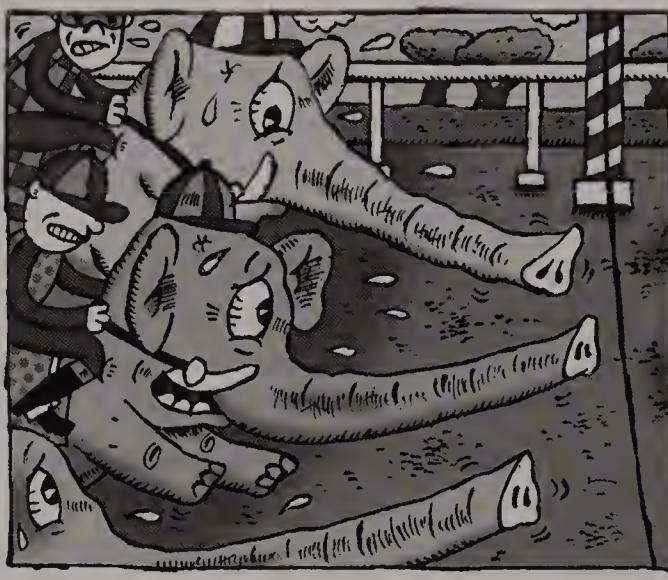
Kentucky Senator Rand Paul. **30-1.** Keeps spitting out bit in order to bite other horses. Not known for winning spirit. Comes from stable comfortable with losing.

Texas Senator Ted Cruz. **12-1.** Likes to lead. Also likes to box other horses right into rail.

Real estate mogul Donald Trump. **6-1.** Race would be over if feet ran half as fast as mouth. Tends to focus on wrong purse.

Former New York Governor George Pataki. **1,000-1.** This grisly war horse was put out to stud decades ago.

Former Virginia Governor Jim Gilmore. **6,000-1.** Longest shot in a field of longish long shots. If he wins, be prepared for stewards to be fired. ♦



PAUL CORIO

best races could be behind him. Trying hand at marathon distance for first time. May carry too much weight with both Koch brothers clinging to saddle.

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush. **4-1.** Deserving favorite. Only true thoroughbred in field. Burden of heavy expectations could leave him short. Less stellar brother faced similar difficulties.

Ohio Governor John Kasich. **20-1.** Late-running sprinter may have timed entry perfectly. Or won't make it onto track. One or the other.

South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham. **30-1.** Good in-

The Summer of Women



Normally, summer-time represents dead months on the sports calendar. Baseball fans and writers have center stage, so the large majority of sports buffs make the decision to simply yawn and check out (sorry, baseball fans).

But this summer has been different, even historic. It will be remembered as a moment when the place of women in sports took a consequential turn.

On the field of play, this has been, above all else, the Summer of Serena. It was the moment when Serena Williams was roundly recognized as the greatest player in the history of women's tennis. Serena's combination of strength, precision, and charisma has left tennis fans in a state of awe and jacked up ratings for women's tennis on par with or in excess of the men's game.

The women's World Cup soccer tournament in Canada went beyond anyone's expectations, with the U.S. team beating the Japanese defending champions 5-2. The game included what is being called the greatest goal in U.S. soccer history, women or men—the midfield floater by tournament MVP Carli Lloyd. That final contest had ratings higher

than every single game of the NBA finals. Among people ages eighteen to forty-nine, the ratings were up an astounding 68 percent from the 2011 Women's World Cup finals.

Then there is Ronda Rousey. The Mixed Martial Arts champion starred in the Summer Blockbuster *Furious 7* and also won the sports ESPY award for "Best Fighter." Upon winning, Rousey talked a very particular—and very gendered—brand of smack to fellow nominee Floyd Mayweather. Referencing his repugnant history of domestic violence, Rousey said, "I wonder how Floyd feels being beat by a woman for once."

Another sign that we are in a sea-change moment is a spectacle that is not a sport at all: pro wrestling. Seriously. A new group of women pro wrestlers in World Wrestling Entertainment are changing the way people view women in the sport. They are Sasha Banks, Charlotte (real name Ashley Elizabeth Fliehr), and Becky Lynch. And they are setting this part of the sports world aflame.

Normally, pro wrestling projects images of women roughly similar to the human party favors at the Playboy Mansion. But this summer, that shifted because the overwhelmingly male fan base of the sport started cheering like crazy not for the looks but for the skills of these women

wrestlers. Pro wrestling, which lacks the institutional inertia that plagues the big sports networks, quickly shifted from rank sexism to treating these women as real stars.

So, there is a lesson—a progressive lesson, believe it or not—to learn from pro wrestling. It is a lesson that all the networks should learn: ESPN devoting 2 percent of its SportsCenter coverage to women's athletics, with the anchors briefly covering their sports as though they were enduring a trip to the dentist, is simply not going to cut it anymore. Pay imbalances that have the U.S. women's soccer squad taking home only \$2 million in prize money, compared to the \$35 million awarded to the German men's team (winners in last year's World Cup), is not going to cut it. Ignoring the fact that Serena is the athlete of our times—male or female—is not going to cut it.

The future of sports can be seen in the thousands of young girls who lined the streets of New York City to greet the women's team as they were feted for a parade in the Canyon of Heroes. It is seen in the Serena fans who are on the edge of their seats as she approaches Margaret Court's record of twenty-four Grand Slam titles. It is seen in the summer of 2015, a time when women refused to be put in the corner of the sports world any longer. ♦

Dave Zirin is the host of Sirius XM Radio's popular weekly show Edge of Sports Radio and the sports editor for The Nation. His latest book is Brazil's Dance with the Devil.

Under the White Sun

Under the white sun,
the twisted people came
with their twisted God.
Under the white sun,
they twisted the throats
of those they encountered.
Eventually, they twisted the land.
Now they have twisted the weather.
Today, most of us are twisted, but we
should pray for those few who are not.
Maybe they can shelter us, however
briefly, from the blazing colonial sun
that has incinerated our shadowed
blood for four centuries now.

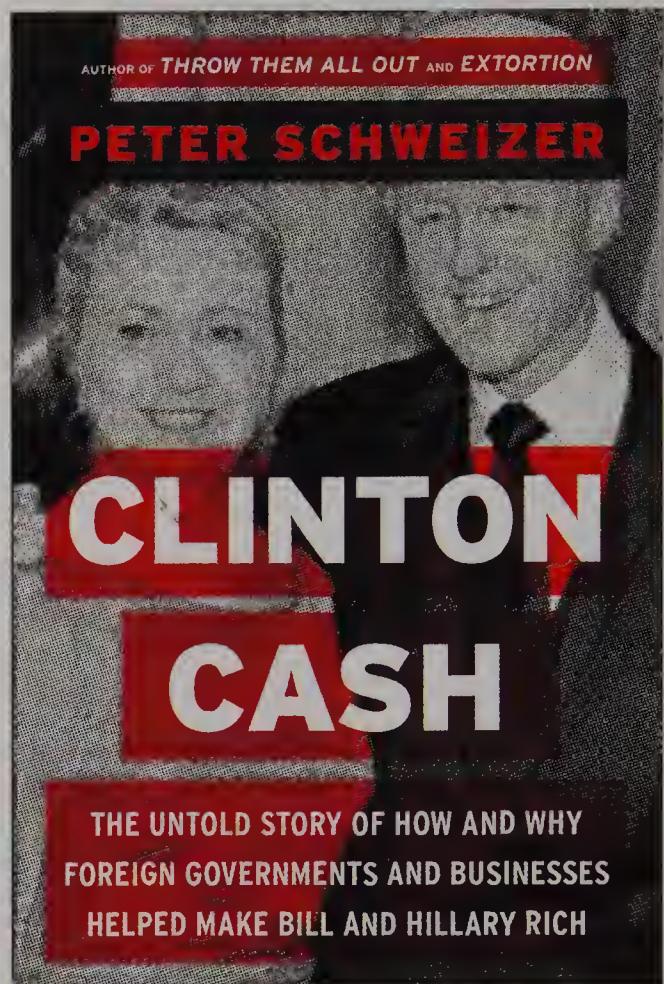
Adrian C. Louis was born and raised in Nevada and is an enrolled member of the Lovelock Paiute Tribe. A new book of poems, Random Exorcisms, is due from Pleiades Press in 2016. More info at Adrian-C-Louis.com.

For the Hate of Hillary

By Tanner Cole

Clinton Cash: The Untold Story of How and Why Foreign Governments and Businesses Helped Make Bill and Hillary Rich

By Peter Schweizer
Harper. 256 pages. \$19.59.



Since Hillary Clinton entered the public eye, she's been the target of a torrent of conservative rage. In 2007, columnist Jonah Goldberg wrote a book comparing her to Mussolini. In a 2015 tome, religious academic Bob Thiel explained how Hillary could bring about the prophetic destruction of America.

During Clinton's 2008 campaign, John Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* magazine, wrote a strategically timed book titled *Can She Be Stopped?* It called her America's "worst nightmare." Last year, *Weekly Standard* editor Daniel Halper unleashed *Clinton, Inc.*, followed by investigative reporter Aaron Klein's *The REAL Benghazi Story*.

Other titles in the genre include *Hillary's Scheme: Inside the Next Clinton's Ruthless Agenda to Take the White House* and *The Hillary Trap: Looking for Power in All the Wrong Places*.

Most of these are easy to dismiss: nutty, mean, occasionally bloodthirsty. But there is something noteworthy

about the number of journalists, authors, and academics filling hundreds of pages with critiques. Hating Hillary is a national pastime.

In his latest book, *Clinton Cash*, author Peter Schweizer holds a magnifying glass to Hillary's political career. With a debut at number two on the *New York Times* bestseller list and an ecstatic reception by the pundits on Fox News, Schweizer's book may be a classic piece of anti-Clinton literature.

Clearly, the cultural backlash both Clintons have stirred up, including a hefty dose of rightwing misogyny, accounts, in part, for the rise of the anti-Hillary genre. But *Clinton Cash* is more compelling than the

Tanner Cole is an editorial intern at The Progressive.

screeds with which it shares a shelf, because of the heft of Schweizer's critique.

Schweizer outlines his thesis in chapter one: "We will see a pattern of financial transactions involving the Clintons that occurred contemporaneous with favorable U.S. policy decisions benefitting those providing the funds." He calls the Clinton Foundation, a huge umbrella of global charities, a "middle man" that keeps Clinton promotion "clearly central" to its purpose.

Schweizer and his team of investigators, who "asked that their names not be included in the acknowledgments," explore Clinton's tax forms, leaked documents, news reports, and public speeches. At times, Schweizer sounds like he's sitting across the table with a grin, waving a thick stack of documents, and saying, "But you don't have to trust me!"

Reading the book, I did develop some trust issues.

Schweizer has a partisan bias. Back in 2008, he wrote a book with the subhead "Why conservatives work harder, feel happier, have closer families, take fewer drugs, give more generously, value honesty more, are less materialistic and envious, whine less ... and even hug their children more than liberals." Interesting theory.

And, as *The Guardian* noted, Schweizer made some serious mistakes. He sourced a fake press release in a section condemning Clinton's role in the Keystone XL pipeline debacle. He overstated her involvement, as Secretary of State, in a uranium deal with Russia. And, in a few instances, he claimed that Bill was paid huge amounts for speeches he actually performed for free. These and other apparent mistakes were corrected in the book's Kindle version.

Weeks before Schweizer's book was published, Clinton assembled a war room to refute its claims. Her team began sending chunks of the narrative to various news organizations with critical comments. She officially quit the Clinton Foundation.

The book details how, as a U.S. Senator, Clinton reversed her stance on India's refusal to abide by the nuclear nonproliferation treaty while receiving "a series of large payments made at pivotal moments to the Clinton machine" through speaking fees, campaign donations, and Clinton Foundation gifts made by Indian officials.

Clinton Cash alleges that the foundation helped com-

panies gain approval to wipe out South American rain forests. Schweizer paints the foundation as a massive PR scheme masquerading as charity, and he writes that even "the Clintons' charitable work puts money in their pockets." Huge amounts of money are thrown at Bill for his speeches. Rich people around the world suggest that Clinton family "friendship" can be bought.

And, as *The Washington Post* has reported, the Clinton Foundation does allow some foreign donors to remain secret.

It's not just conservatives who have doubts about Clinton. Four out of ten Democrats don't think the word "honest" describes her, according to a recent poll. Many of her major contributors are banks and financial firms like Goldman Sachs and Citigroup—hardly the departure from corporate dominion that progressives yearn for.

Still, Hillary's career is impressive, from First Lady to Senator to Secretary of State. She's an elite politico, an establishment candidate, and a political insider.

Hillary's 2014 book, *Hard Choices*, presents her term as Secretary of State in a sunny light. Anything that might be a strike against her was just a difficult decision, but don't worry, because, as she puts it, "One thing that has never been a hard choice for me is serving our country."

Clinton's supporters, like *The Nation*'s Katha Pollitt, look on the bright side. "A woman President—not a Sarah Palin or Margaret Thatcher, but a liberal Democrat keen on promoting women in politics—would shake up the old-boy networks, energize the women's vote, and draw more women to the party," she writes.

Hillary is an outspoken feminist, and is now including gay rights and important social issues in her campaign platform. She actually has the legitimacy to take on Republican fundraising, plus years of experience.

But to ignore Schweizer's book would be a mistake. He writes, "Foreign money has flowed to the Clintons and their foundation from people and entities with intense personal interests in the political choices of the Secretary of State. And in several instances that we have described, the evidence suggests that Hillary shifted course to the benefit of those providing the funds."

Such allegations, even if they are coming from someone who has it in for Hillary, are cause for concern. ♦

A Supreme Awakening



From 1956 until 2010, CBS television's daytime lineup included America's longest-running soap opera, *As the World Turns*. But times change, and now a real-life human drama of profound importance has debuted in America, titled *As the Generations Turn*.

It's the inspiring story of our society's ongoing struggle to evolve toward dignity and mutual respect. The moment came on June 26, when Justice Anthony Kennedy proclaimed from the ornate chamber of the Supreme Court: "The right to marry is a fundamental right inherent in the liberty of the person, and under the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment couples of the same sex may not be deprived of that right and that liberty."

Kennedy and Justices Breyer, Ginsburg, Kagan, and Sotomayor voted to make this higher level of inclusiveness the law of the land, but they are not its producers. Rather, the court's ruling that states can no longer ban same-sex marriages is the culmination of generations of painful struggle by brave gay and lesbian activists and advocates.

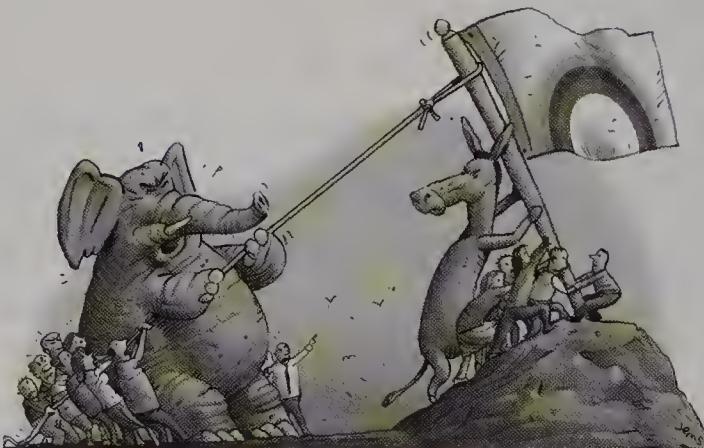
This democratic evolution literally came out of America's closet, rising up from only a few neighborhoods at first but then entering the consciousness of today's youth. Rejecting the shibboleths, ignorance, fears, and bigotry that have previously permitted such discrimination, the nation's young people have, in a remarkably short time, changed

people to Abe Lincoln's principled refusal to honor the Court's 1857 ruling that African Americans could not be citizens. Sure, Mike, you're a modern-day Lincoln—except that he was *opposing* discrimination.

Then came the wild hair of the GOP's presidential menagerie, Donald Trump, trumpeting his keen insight that the court's gay marriage decision is Jeb Bush's fault. Really. The Donald explained that Jeb's brother George had appointed Chief Justice John Roberts to the court, so . . . there you have it. (Shhhh—let's not spoil Trump's hallucination by telling him that Roberts actually voted *against* letting gays marry.)

Now on to Governor Scott Walker, widely touted by the GOP's billionaires as the "serious" contender. Yet he is seriously pushing a constitutional amendment to allow states to keep prohibiting same-sex marriages. "No one wants to live in a country where the government coerces people to act in opposition to their conscience," said Scott, apparently oblivious to the fact that state governments have long been coercing LGBTQ people to do exactly that.

The Republicans who want to lead the nation are trying to march us back to the bigoted past, but there's a whole generation that won't go with them. ♦



JEM SULLIVAN

the nation's consciousness.

The true Supremes are the people themselves, and it's their awakening to enlightenment that has transformed marriage equality from taboo to simple justice.

Unfortunately, not everyone has evolved on the issue of equality in our Land of the Free. The Supreme Court's ruling has set off a cacophony of howling hyperbole by the GOP's far-out presidential wannabes.

"I will not acquiesce to an imperial court," blustered political huckster Mike Huckabee. "Resist and reject judicial tyranny." Huck even likened his cry for continued bias against gay



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ACHIEVING DOMESTIC EQUITY

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court reaffirmed what many of us have long believed—the Constitution is a living, breathing document built on a foundation of equality and the pursuit of happiness. It did not take a constitutional amendment to establish marriage equality, because those concepts are embedded in our nation's founding documents.

The struggle for that important achievement was carried out over many years, from the streets, to the court rooms, to the board rooms.

We were pleased to join 379 employers and employer organizations in a friend of the court (*amicus curiae*) brief to the US Supreme Court to explain how discriminatory restrictions on the right to marry hurt business. According to the Court:

"As more than 100 amici make clear in their filings, many of the central institutions in American life—state and local governments, the military, **large and small businesses**, labor unions, religious organizations, law enforcement, civic groups, professional organizations, and universities—have devoted substantial attention to the question. ***This has led to an enhanced understanding of the issue***—an understanding reflected in the arguments now presented for resolution as a matter of constitutional law." *Obergefell v. Hodges*, Slip Op. at 23 (emphasis added).

Some of the largest publicly traded corporations in the world signed that brief, demonstrating that this issue had already been settled in the mainstream business community. By 2012, the vast majority of Fortune 500 companies prohibited workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation, setting a higher standard than the law required.

That didn't happen by accident. Much of it happened, company by company, due to the hard work of investors who believe that discrimination is bad for business. Companies were persuaded through letters from their shareholders, face to face meetings and the submission of shareholder proposals that were put to a vote at company annual meetings across the country. Some of these dialogues took years to achieve success.

The **Domini Social Equity Fund** played a small part in these efforts, convincing several companies to amend their non-discrimination policies to include "sexual orientation," and voting for shareholder proposals submitted by others. A small change brought about by your mutual fund can have ripple effects throughout society.

This work helped to lay the groundwork for marriage equality by changing perceptions in the investor and business communities, strengthening the notion that an employee's sexual orientation or gender identity has nothing to do with their ability to perform on the job. We explained that corporations would benefit by greater employee loyalty and commitment. They would also gain the ability to recruit from the broadest possible pool of talent.

In the world of finance, the phrase "domestic equity" does not refer to marriage equality, it refers to the stock of American companies. But the word "equity" has a double-meaning. After all, a system that is fundamentally unfair is also not good for business in the long run.

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